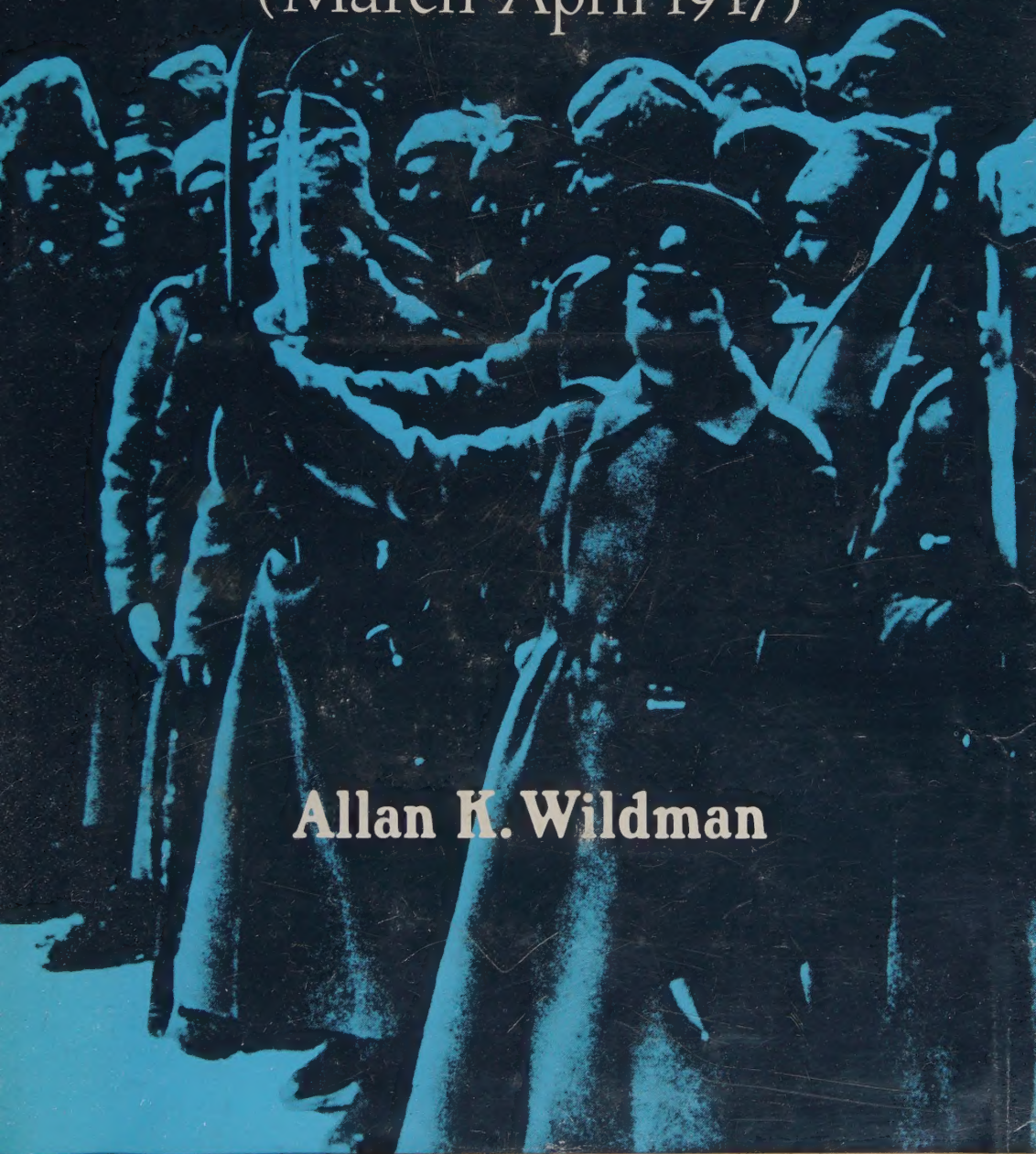


The End of the Russian Imperial Army

The Old Army
and the Soldiers' Revolt
(March-April 1917)



Allan K. Wildman

The role of the Russian Army in the Revolution of 1917 has long been recognized as crucial, yet the subject has been relatively unexplored. Allan Wildman presents the first detailed study of the Army's collapse under the strains of war and of the front soldiers' efforts to participate in the Revolution. Although in this first of two volumes he gives extensive coverage to the social composition of the Old Army and its role in the autocratic system, and to the soldiers' role in the February Revolution in Petrograd, the real subject of his study is the soldier at the front, his internal perceptions of the Revolution, and how those perceptions governed his behavior in 1917.

The author's extensive use of archival and primary materials enables him to challenge a number of conventional views—both Western and Soviet. He focuses on the soldiers' distrust of their commanding officers, their replacement of the hierarchical command order with new representative institutions, and the eventual linkage of their loyalties to the Petrograd Soviet rather than to the Provisional Government, which in effect extended the system of "dual power" to the front.

Professor Wildman finds that an inversion of authority in the Army's command structure was a direct consequence of the soldiers' reaction to the Tsar's abdication and the revolution in Petrograd.

Allan K. Wildman is Professor of History at Ohio State University.

Jacket illustration: Jubilant soldiers during uprising of February 27-28, 1917 (Times History of the War)



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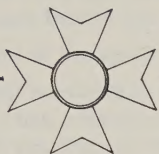
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THE END OF
THE RUSSIAN IMPERIAL ARMY

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and the Soldiers' Revolt
(March-April 1917)

ALLAN K. WILDMAN

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
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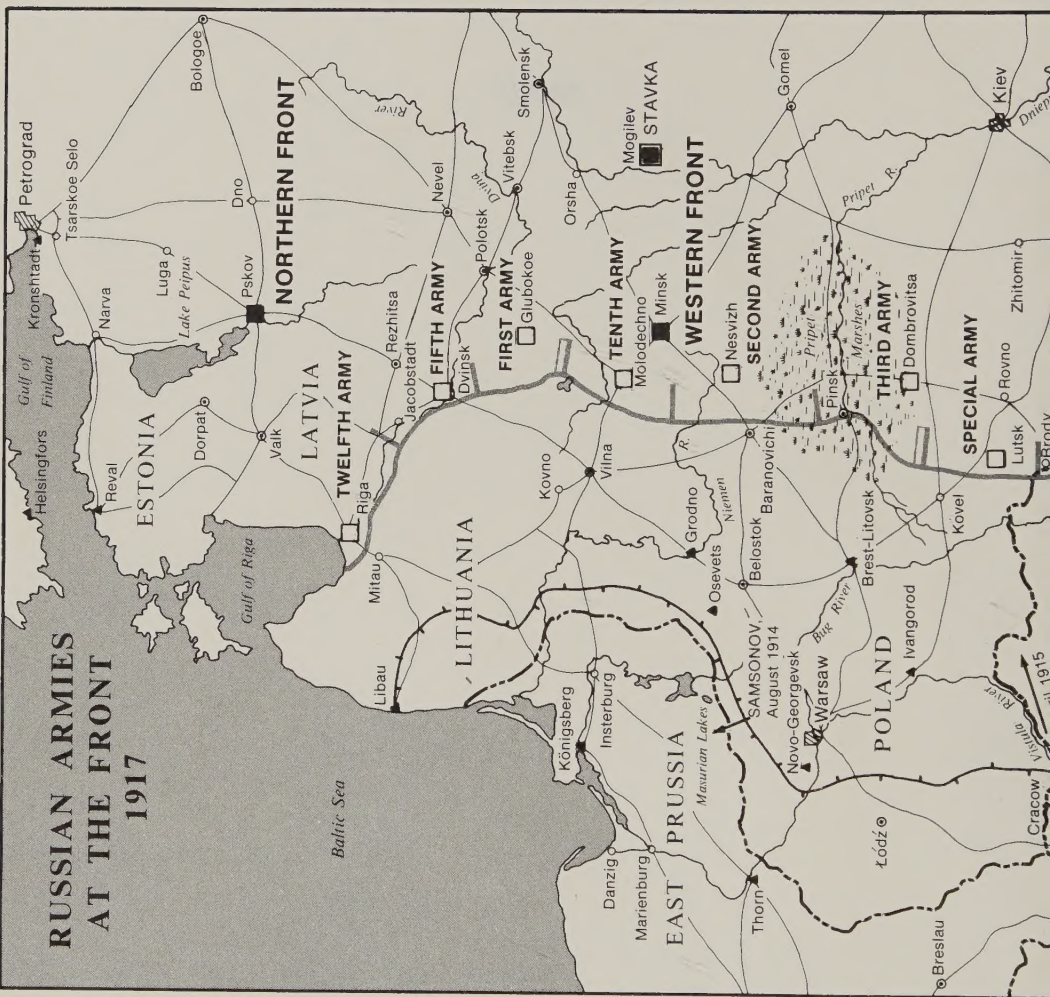
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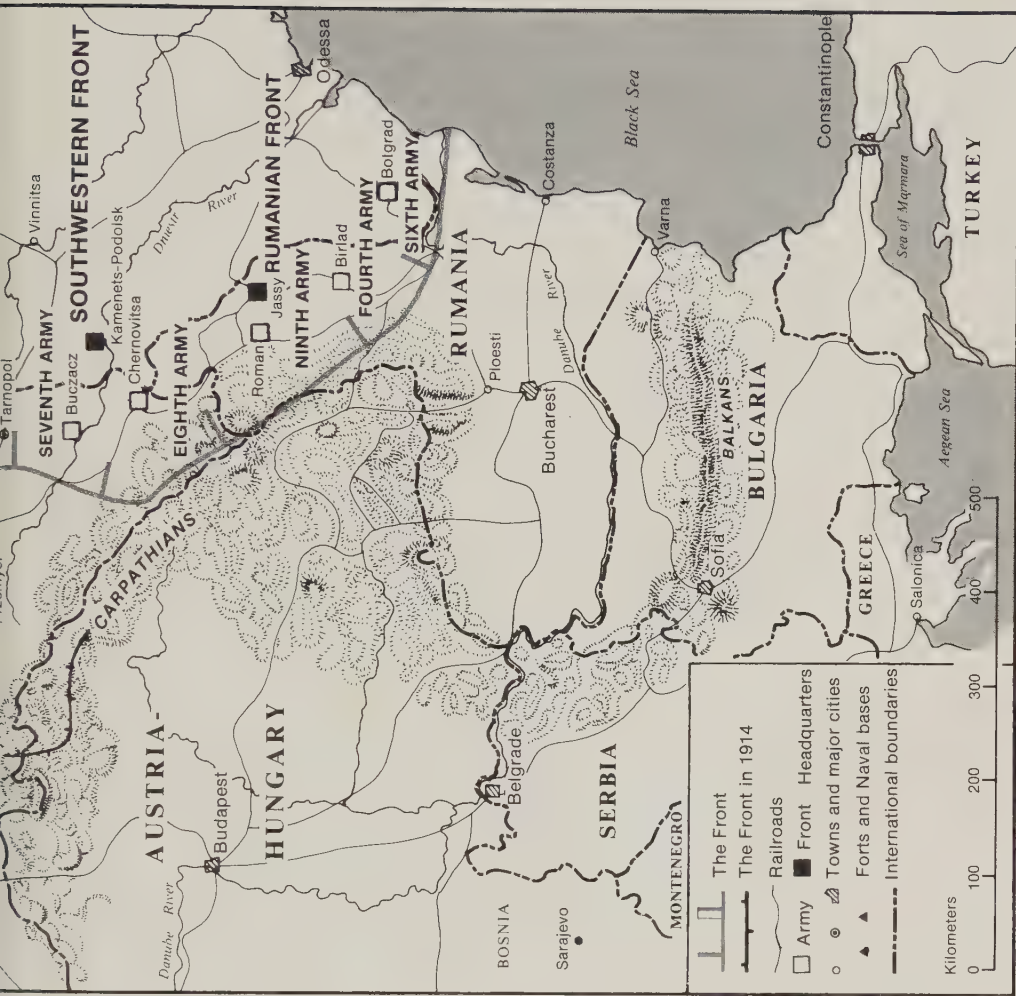


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MAP

RUSSIAN ARMIES AT THE FRONT 1917





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PREFACE

NO EVENT has left a deeper mark on contemporary historical consciousness or occasioned a larger volume of speculative and politically interested writing than the Russian Revolution of 1917. Yet it is remarkable that most of the basic research on its crucial aspects is of recent date, and vast areas remain to be explored. For almost two decades Oliver Radkey's *The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism* stood alone as a monographic work of serious proportions. William Rosenberg and Alexander Rabinowitch have since added important studies on the Liberals and Bolsheviks, respectively, and others have made valuable, though less weighty, contributions (for example, Ronald Suny on the Baku Commune and Rex Wade on Soviet-peace policy). A number of promising studies are in various stages of completion, and Soviet publications have improved in quality and quantity, so that in the foreseeable future one will have considerably more factual material upon which to base efforts at synthesis.

Characterizations of the Revolution in the general historical literature continue to revolve in the two traditional orbits, that is, the several varieties of Marxism, or the scholarly historiography of Cold War provenance. The latter tends to perceive Bolshevism as voluntarist and power-oriented, rather than ideological, and to repeat endlessly the scenario that the Bolsheviks took advantage of the chaos created by the war and the collapse of the monarchy to "seize power." One acutely senses the need for new assessments less bound by the conventional molds and more adequately grounded in newly available information.

It was to serve such an ultimate purpose that I set out on the present work. My previous study of Russian Social Democracy was based on the notion that significant political movements are borne along by underlying social forces that consciously or unconsciously reshape them and place limits on their mode of political behavior. Although I still hold to this postulate and believe that I accurately represented the social complexion of the movement, I am acutely aware that I devoted more attention to the politicized layers—the intelligentsia and workers—than to the working-class matrix. The design of this study is to explore precisely the matrix—to stake out one of the major social arenas

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of 1917 and to plumb to the depths its internal dynamics and interactions with other forces. This approach precludes qualifying Lenin as the master architect of a "new type" of revolutionary political party, one that orchestrated events and manipulated social forces in defiance of the inertia of history and ultimately brought forth a society based on its preconceived blueprint. Such is the dogma current in both Soviet and Western historiography. Rabinowitch has ably demonstrated that Bolshevism in 1917 was not the monolithic, suprahistorical locomotive of our still dominant literature, but a complex, many-tiered construction that drew its strength from a variety of mass followings. The latter, though not always tugging in the same direction, nevertheless shared a disenchantment with the unresponsiveness of the Provisional Government and the Soviet leadership. They turned to Bolshevism to force the Revolution to fulfill its original inspiration. That their aspirations were visionary, chiliastic, and unrealizable, and that in the end the Bolsheviks "betrayed" their trust to forge a quite different type of society (a theme developed at length by Isaac Deutscher), pertains to a different epoch. The Revolution of 1917—the heady interval distinguished by the politicization, the revolutionary activation, the erupting to the surface of history of Russia's millions of peasants, workers, and other suppressed groups—deserves not only to be chronicled and analyzed, but also to be understood in the context of the broad flow of history from centuries past.

It is a milestone in contemporary historiography that John L. H. Keep has produced the first major monograph on the social substrata of the Revolution. Fortunately, I elected to study the one major group he chose to exclude, namely, the soldiers of the Russian Imperial Army. Though the reader may find that our perceptions at times diverge widely, I could not agree more with his premise that in the drama of "mass mobilization" workers, peasants, and soldiers must be considered together (*The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization* [London, 1976], p. xv). For myself, a study of the Russian Army was a far from logical choice: I had no previous attraction to military history (not even a boyhood fascination with the gamesmanship of war), and only once, toward the end of a brief term in the Navy in 1946, have I so much as discharged a firearm. In the interests of detached scholarship, I have had to suppress an instinctive antipathy to organized violence, both martial and revolutionary. Nevertheless,

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in the process of defining an area of investigation that could supply a major missing ingredient in the current understanding of the Revolution, a study of the Army, particularly of its legions of gray-coated *muzhiks* furrowed into two-thousand-odd miles of trenches, seemed uniquely appropriate.

First of all, Russia was at war and had been for three grueling years. Fifteen million of its people had been processed into the ranks, close to two million were never to return, several times that number returned crippled and scarred—and all in some measure bore deep wounds of the mind and spirit, which conditioned their behavior during the Revolution. Second, the upheaval in the Army cannot be viewed separately from the social upheaval. The overwhelming majority of the trench soldiers were peasants in uniform, whose thoughts were never very far removed from their villages, but virtually every other social sector was also represented in the ranks in a stratification roughly comparable to the society from which they were drawn. The lesson of modern history has been that mass armies, “nations in arms,” carry over the strains of their societies and are thus vulnerable to upheaval in defeat, and sometimes even in victory (for example, Italy and France). Finally, the politicized soldiery was to become one of the chief focuses of power in the new post-February combination, initially as a consequence of the Petrograd mutiny and Order No. One, but ultimately because of a revolution in authority throughout the entire Army, front and rear, and in the Baltic and Black Sea fleets as well.

A study of the Russian Army should also contribute to one of the fundamental historiographical controversies concerning the Russian Revolution. As Leopold Haimson has pointed out (in a paper given at the American Historical Association meeting in 1968), one set of views maintains that the Revolution of 1905 did nothing to resolve the basic social contradictions of autocratic Russia; a renewed confrontation was in the making, and its outbreak was only delayed by the onset of the First World War. Its antipode maintains that the Revolution of 1905, though ending in a political compromise, freed a series of modernizing forces that put Russia irrevocably on a Western path of development; given a few more decades to work themselves out, these forces would have resulted in a stable, if not a democratic, constitutional order. This view looks on the war as a “tragic” fortuity that prematurely subjected the fragile compromise to unendurable strains; in the

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end the system “collapsed,” opening the road to an anarchy born of political fragmentation and war weariness that only the Bolsheviks knew how to exploit. The Revolution, therefore, was the child of the war, a view that has been articulated anew by Solzhenitsyn in *August 1914*. I do not subscribe to either of these categorical opposites without serious qualification, and it is hoped that the present study will facilitate the formulation of alternatives. My purpose is not to develop a full-blown revisionist interpretation, but rather to expose important new layers of information that will serve as a foundation for such an enterprise.

Although the reader will not find here a tightly constructed, comprehensive theory of the Revolution, it may be useful to identify in advance those historical images that emerge most clearly from the materials covered in this volume but that are relatively novel in the literature or have been inadequately articulated. First is the somewhat different picture of the social makeup of the Imperial Army: the character of the leadership was less aristocratic and increasingly professional following the Miliutin reforms of the 1870s, a process that gathered momentum in spite of the efforts of the last two tsars to shore up the traditional structure of the state. This development paralleled internal pressures for professionalizing the bureaucracy and other governing institutions, and it led to the same sort of split at the top (Witte versus Durnovo). Further, one is obliged to conclude that two well-intentioned efforts at military modernization—the conscription law of 1874 (short term of service for all social classes, extended period in reserves) and the establishment of junker officer schools for nonaristocratic types (which fed a second, growing stream into the general staff corporation via the Academy)—were extremely subversive of the autocratic system. Nevertheless, the general historical literature continues to make use of the stereotypes of “tsarist officers” drawn from the reactionary landed nobility, and of brutish soldier-automatons who performed their repressive duties with mindless indifference to their social origins. In fact, the Army was considerably more tolerant of upward social mobility than Russian society itself, and in a number of concrete ways it interacted with the latter, undercutting its own role as the ultimate police force.

Second, there has been precious little information available on the impact of the Revolution of 1905 on the Army. It has been all but overlooked that this revolution occurred during a calami-

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tous war and that several million mobilized reservists, traumatized by defeat and the collapse of state authority east of the Urals, had to be reintegrated into civilian society. The Army usually appears in the literature on 1905 as a faceless instrument used by the tsarist government to bring the country back into hand, whereas in reality, incipient disintegration was just as pervasive inside the Army as outside it; mutinies and disorders, which were closely attuned to peasant unrest, continued for over a year. A study of the revolt against military authority in 1917 would be utterly lacking in perspective were not some coverage given to the precedents of 1905-1907. The discussion of the military reforms after 1905 makes no claim to be comprehensive or final; it serves primarily to fill the enormous gap in the literature until a good monograph comes along. (It is to be hoped that the excellent dissertation by John D. Walz [Syracuse, 1967] will one day see light.)

The chapter on the Army during the Great War will probably not satisfy demanding critics, especially military historians. Readers desiring a thorough treatment of the Eastern Front should turn to the well-researched, but flawed, general history by Norman Stone. The more limited purpose here is to register the social components, the far-reaching structural changes in the wartime army, and the imprint of the war experience itself—all of which cast light on revolutionary behavior in 1917. I have tried to strike a balance between the acute grievances carried over from civilian life and the traumas of the war itself, though, by late 1916, these two phenomena had become inextricably intertwined and were lending momentum to each other. The most important single point to note is that the war greatly aggravated the deepest cleavage in Russian society—not between the autocracy and the political forces, but between the cultured and noncultured layers, between all those groups (including a good share of the radical intelligentsia) that found a new identity in the cause of the war and the alienated masses, to whom it had become a nightmarish catastrophe thrust on them by their age-old oppressors, the *pomeshchiki* (landed nobility) and officialdom. In the minds of peasant-soldiers, their oppressors assumed protean contours in the course of the war, being variously objectified in their officers, the police, the “internal German,” spies, *burzhuis* and speculators. and, finally, in the dynasty itself. The Revolution was interpreted as a deliverance from these malevolent forces, and the inference

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was secretively drawn that the sooner the war was over, the sooner they could redeem its promised benefits, above all, the land.

This version of the main driving force of the Revolution will doubtless meet with some skepticism, but unmistakable evidence of it is encountered in every phase of this investigation, from the abundant testimony of the censorship and police authorities before the Revolution to the spontaneous reactions of the soldier mass to every major event from the abdication of the tsar to the proclamation of soviet power. It is hoped that the evidence presented here will lay to rest all notions of the "isolation" of the front from the rear and of the indifference of ordinary soldiers to Petrograd politics. During the period covered by this volume the most striking expression of the identification of the soldiers at the front with the Revolution was their insistence on authentic information from the new government and their extreme mistrust of the versions related by their officers; often senior commanders were arrested on suspicion of sympathy with the old regime. This development, coupled with the rapid formation of elective committees and their insistence that officers observe the new forms of revolutionary etiquette regarding red ribbons, saluting, and the new forms of greeting (the formal "you" for soldiers, "Mister Lieutenant," "Mister Colonel," etc., for officers), amounted to the abrogation of the inherited system of command authority. (In the sequel to this volume, the same assertiveness will be manifest in the soldiers' responses to the Kornilov affair, in the endorsement of the Second Congress of Soviets against the wishes of the higher army committees, and in the massive soldier plebiscite in favor of "immediate peace regardless of the consequences.")

A more specific companion theme of this volume is the reinstitutionalization of power in the wake of the disappearance of autocratic modes of authority and of a convulsion in which several hundred thousand garrison soldiers were the critical element. While the locus of the 1917 Revolution was initially in the metropolitan center, very far removed from the front, the strains of wartime were such that the news of it only needed to be conveyed by telegraph to every part of the country for local institutional complexes to come into being, which were roughly comparable to the dual power arrangements in the capital. The communications nexus and social-institutional ingredients were somewhat different and slower in coming in the countryside and at the front, but there also mass organizations sprang up, exercising a suspicious veto over the

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nominal bearers of authority. Within a week or ten days, the field commanders at the front had lost their ability to control their troops and were obliged to legitimize the spontaneously created committees by official regulations simply to maintain some measure of control over the situation and to head off intervention by the Petrograd Soviet. The process by which the soldiers' committees became full-fledged representative institutions firmly welded to the soviet network is perhaps the most striking development to be chronicled here, and the least known through the existing literature. These committees did not, however, accurately reflect the social composition and attitudes of their constituencies, particularly at the corps and army level. It has almost escaped notice that the Army in 1917 was comprised of all social types, and that among the junior officers, technical specialists, clerks, doctors, veterinarians, and NCOs were liberally represented all the social layers that had become politicized in the convulsions of 1905. Thus the "committee class" was a microcosm of radical Russia—uniformed intellectuals, students, underground veterans, worker-activists, national minorities, even literate peasant artisans and tradesmen—that by habit and tradition drew the soldiers into the orbit of revolutionary politics. This fundamental sociological reality helps to explain a good many of the unexpected aspects of this investigation.

This sketch should be sufficient to prepare the reader for what is to be found in this volume. The terminal point, roughly early May, is to a certain extent arbitrary, as would be any breaking point in 1917. But it is important to note that the formation of the Coalition Government and the ardent promotion of an offensive by Defense Minister Kerensky put the soldiers' strivings in an entirely different context. The front committees, unshakably loyal to their socialist minister, could no longer serve as the vehicle of the masses' optimistic expectations of an early peace and the fulfillment of their social aspirations. The circuitous road to October and "soviet power" at the beck and siren call of the Bolsheviks, which engaged the front every bit as much as it did the workers, peasants, and soldiers of the rear, will be the theme of the subsequent volume.



Research for this study was begun in the spring and summer of 1968 with the aid of grants from the American Philosophical

PREFACE

Society and the Research Foundation of the State University of New York. The major work of collecting and sorting through materials was accomplished in 1969-1970 at the Hoover Institution, the Columbia and New York Public libraries, and the Lenin Library in Moscow with generous support from the American Council of Learned Societies and the Senior Scholars Exchange Program with the USSR Academy of Sciences sponsored by the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). I am especially grateful to Marina Tinkov, who helped me to assemble research materials at the Hoover Institution, to L. F. Magerovsky, Curator of the Archive of Russian and Eastern European History and Culture at Columbia University, who went to great lengths to provide me with suitable manuscript materials from this uniquely rich collection, and to my Soviet colleague and friend V. I. Miller, who rendered me every possible assistance while I was attached to the Academy of Sciences and shared with me his extensive knowledge of the subject of this book.

At various times I have received encouragement and intellectual stimulation from fellow American scholars too numerous to mention, although I am acutely aware that the end result could have benefited from a more sustained and vigorous interchange. I should like to mention Alexander Rabinowitch, William Rosenberg, Rex Wade, and Robert Devlin as among those whose researches and general approach seem especially in tune with my own; collectively, our work should put the historiographical discussion on a new plane. The significant crises and turning points, the political forces at work, and the "masses" are, through our respective endeavors, no longer simply abstractions and ciphers, but quantities accessible to examination and discussion. We seem to concur on certain basic dynamics of the revolutionary process that have not hitherto found clear formulation, and we share a common dissatisfaction with the stock of available literature on 1917, although we all seem to except from this stricture W. H. Chamberlin (*The Russian Revolution*) and Oliver Radkey, who continue to challenge and stimulate. Devlin has not yet published, but his doctoral dissertation on the Petrograd workers is a sound piece of work that certainly one day will receive wide recognition; the others have already published monographs on 1917 and are also engaged in new and continuing projects of considerable interest.

Research for the second part of this project was substantially completed in the summer of 1977 through a second rewarding visit

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to the Soviet Union supported by IREX. Whereas for the present volume I was afforded very limited access to the archival materials in the Central State Military History Archive of the USSR in Moscow (TsGVIA), virtually all my requests for materials were honored during my most recent visit, so that I was hard put to make adequate use of them in the time available. Although I was obliged to confine my note taking to what was required for the second volume, I was able to leaf through and read hastily the records of a large number of units for the time period covered here, in many cases seeing the originals of documents that I have cited from secondary sources (proclamations, committee regulations, orders of the Provisional Government, etc.). My consolation is that in no case did they seem to alter my findings, and in a number of cases they dramatically confirmed my less thoroughly documented hypotheses (for example, the role of Duma deputies in persuading commanders to consent to soldiers' committees). Though sparing myself and my publisher what could amount to extensive alterations in the text, I have in a few of the most necessary instances added new archival references to the footnotes in parentheses, without, however, adding them to the list of sources.

I have used the standard Library of Congress system of transliteration. Dates for the most part follow those of the sources, namely, the Julian or Old Style calendar, which in 1917 was thirteen days behind the Gregorian (New Style). Where confusion could result owing to concurrent events in the West, "O.S." or "N.S." is added in parentheses as needed. Since the contemporary sources are by no means consistent in their designation of military units, for the purposes of this volume I have employed Arabic numerals for regiments and divisions above the Tenth (105th Infantry Division, 462nd Staritskii Regiment, but Second Siberian Rifle Division and Fourth Turkestan Rifle Regiment), Roman numerals for corps (V, XIV, XLI Corps), and written designations for the fourteen armies (First, Twelfth, Caucasus, and Special armies). Other usages have been introduced to facilitate brevity and clarity—for example, capitalizing Academy and Army whenever they stand for the General Staff Academy or the Imperial Army. I have reserved an extensive bibliography for the second volume to obviate repetition, but I have included a brief Review of Sources and a list of Abbreviations of Source References for frequently employed source designations. Full references to authored works, published and unpublished, may be located

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by looking under the author's name in the Index, where the appropriate page and footnote with the full entry is given in italics.

A generous grant from the Research Committee of the College of Humanities of Ohio State University helped to make possible the inclusion of maps of the Russian front and Petrograd.

This introduction would not be complete without mentioning pleasant personal associations with three witnesses of this era. My first introduction to Russian history was through the lectures of Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky at the University of Michigan in 1949. I remember well how my first fascination with the Russian Revolution was enlivened through his vivid personal anecdotes, and I was delighted to see them many years later in the context of his remarkable personal chronicle of war and revolution. He was one of those rare representatives of the old aristocratic families who maintained a keen sense of justice and humanity through a very cruel epoch, which very nearly cost him his life when he refused to join the Whites. Another of the outstanding chroniclers of the Revolution, Fedor Stepun, I encountered as a professor for *Kultursoziologie* at the University of Munich in 1955. I caused a scandal in one of his seminars by giving a paper upholding the honor of Russian revolutionaries, and Professor Stepun humbled me by allowing an émigré officer to present a refutation. Finally, I remember with particular pleasure being a guest in the home of Captain Vladimir Littauer and conversing at length over his reminiscences. I regret that I have not made more extensive direct references to his singularly candid and enlightening account of the education of Russian cavalry officers and the comradeship that carried them through the war, but many of my formulations were made with a subliminal awareness of his contribution to my understanding. I must also thank him for the use of an important book from his personal library and for permission to use several photographs.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to my wife Helga, who, despite a demanding profession of her own, typed two complete versions of the manuscript. Without her unique talent for deciphering my impossible handwriting and emendations to emendations of the text, and her flawless rendition of Russian transliterations, this work would still be uncompleted.

ABBREVIATIONS OF SOURCE REFERENCES

PERIODICALS

<i>By</i>	<i>Byloe</i>
<i>FO</i>	<i>Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte</i>
<i>IS</i>	<i>Istoriia SSSR</i>
<i>IZ</i>	<i>Istoricheskie Zapiski</i>
<i>KA</i>	<i>Krasnyi Arkhiv</i>
<i>LR</i>	<i>Letopis' Revoliutsii (Kharkov)</i>
<i>PR</i>	<i>Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia</i>

NEWSPAPERS

<i>IzOA</i>	<i>Izvestiia Vybornykh Osoboi Armii</i> (Special Army Committee)
<i>IzPS</i>	<i>Izvestiia Petrogradskago Soveta Rabochikh i Soldatskikh Deputatov</i>
<i>IzZh</i>	<i>Izvestiia Komiteta Petrogradskikh Zhurnalistov</i>
<i>Iz5A</i>	<i>Izvestiia Armeiskago Komiteta 5-oi Armii</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>Soldatskoe Slovo</i> (nonparty, military, Petrograd)
<i>VVP</i>	<i>Vestnik Vremennago Pravitel'stva</i> (organ of the Provisional Government)

PUBLISHED SOURCES, DOCUMENTARY COLLECTIONS, ANTHOLOGIES, AND SERIAL MONOGRAPHS

<i>OGV</i>	<i>Oktiabr' i grazhdanskaia voina v SSSR. Sbornik statei.</i> Moscow, 1966.
<i>PSPZ</i>	<i>Petrogradskii Sovet Rabochikh i Soldatskikh Deputatov. Protokoly zasedanii ispolnitel'nogo komiteta i biuro i.k.</i> Edited by B. Ia. Nalivaiskii. Moscow and Leningrad, 1925.
<i>PTsR</i>	<i>Padenie tsarskogo rezhima. Stenograficheskii otchet doprosov i pokazanii.</i> Edited by P. E. Shchegolev. 7 vols. Moscow, 1924-1927.

ABBREVIATIONS

- RazA* *Razlozhenie armii v 1917 godu*. Edited by N. E. Kakurin and Ia. A. Iakovlev. Moscow, 1925.
- RDAF* *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v armii i na flote v gody pervoi mirovi voiny. 1914–fevral’ 1917. Sbornik dokumentov*. Edited by A. L. Sidorov. Moscow, 1966.
- RDAP* *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v russkoi armii v gody pervoi russkoi revoliutsii. Sbornik statei*. Edited by V. I. Konovalov. Moscow, 1955.
- RDM* *Revoliutsia 1905-1907 g.g. v Rossii. Dokumenty i materialy*. Documentary series edited by A. M. Pankratova et al., in unnumbered volumes. Moscow, 1955-1957. References to documents identify the individual volumes by the time period covered in each. The volumes used in this work are:
Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii vesnoi i letom 1905 goda. Aprel’-Sentiabr’. Parts I and II. (Cited as *RDM*, Apr.-Sept. 1905, I or II.)
Vserossiiskaia politicheskaiia stachka v Oktiabre 1905 goda. Parts I and II. (*RDM*, Oct. 1905, I or II.)
Vtoroi period revoliutsii 1906-1907 gody. Ianvar’-Mai 1906. Parts I and II. (*RDM*, Jan.-May 1906, I or II.)
- RDRA* *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v russkoi armii v 1917 g. 27 fevralia–24 oktiabria. Sbornik dokumentov*. Edited by L. S. Gaponenko. Moscow, 1968.
- RMVTs* *Rossia v mirovoi voine 1914-1918 goda (v tsifrakh)*. Published by the Tsentral’noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie, Otdel Voennoi Statistiki (Central Statistical Administration, Section on Military Statistics). Moscow, 1925.
- RPG* *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents*. Edited by Robert Browder and Alexander Kersensky. 3 vols. Stanford, 1961.
- RWK* *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918. Die Militärische Operationen zu Lande*. 12 vols. Berlin, 1925-1939. Vols. I–IX published by the Reichsarchiv; Vols. X–XI, by the Kriegsministerium; and Vol. XII, by the Oberkommando des Heeres. Cited in this work are:
 Vol. I. *Die Grenzschlachten im Westen*. 1925.
 Vol. XI. *Die Kriegsführung im Herbst 1916 und im Winter 1917*. 1938.

ABBREVIATIONS

- Vol. XII. *Die Kriegsführung im Frühjahr 1917*. 1939.
- VOSR *Velikaia Oktiabr'skaia sotsialisticheskaia revoliutsiia. Dokumenty i materialy*. Documentary series edited by A. L. Sidorov et al., in unnumbered volumes. Moscow, 1957-1959. References include abbreviated titles of individual volumes:
- Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v Rossii posle sverzheniia samoderzhaviia*. 1957. (Cited as *VOSR. Sverzhenie*.)
- Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v aprele 1917 g. Aprel'skii krizis*. 1958. (*VOSR. Aprel'skii krizis*.)
- VOSRB *Velikaia Oktiabr'skaia sotsialisticheskaia revoliutsiia v Belorussii. Dokumenty i materialy*. 2 vols. Moscow, 1957. Vol. I: *Belorussiia v period podgovtovki sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii (fevral'-oktiabr' 1917 g.)*. Edited by T. S. Gorbunov et al.

ARCHIVES AND ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

- HI The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace. Stanford, California. All manuscripts are cited according to author.
- RA Archive of Russian and Eastern European History and Culture. Columbia University, New York. All manuscripts and documents are cited according to author or name appearing on archive, unless otherwise indicated.
- TsGVIA Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv (Central State Military History Archive). Moscow. Materials used in this volume are:
- Fond 2240, opis' 5, delo 2*. Archive of the Corps Committee of the XXXI Corps of the Third Army, Western Front.
- F. 2241, op. 1, d. 6. Investigative materials on the arrest of the commander, senior doctor, and several officers of the 520th Fokshtanskii Regiment (XXXI Corps, Third Army, Western Front) by the soldiers of that regiment on March 10, 1917.
- F. 2376, op. 1, d. 2. *Protokoly* of the Committee of the 46th Infantry Division, XXV Corps, Eleventh Army, Southwestern Front. April-December 1917.
- F. 2938, op. 1, d. 319. Orders of the day of the

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329th Buzuliiskii Regiment, XXXI Corps, Third Army, Western Front, transferred in May to the Special Army, Southwestern Front. March-April 1917.

F. 2938, op. 1, d. 150. Orders of the day of the 329th Buzuliiskii Regiment. May-June 1917.

F. 3054, op. 2, d. 23. Part I: Orders of the day of the 517th Batumskii Regiment, XXXI Corps, Third Army, Western Front, transferred in May to the Special Army, Southwestern Front. January-December 1917. Part II: *Protokoly* of the Committee of the 517th Batumskii Regiment, January-December 1917.

All references to regimental documents will be by *fond* number and date only, with a brief characterization of the source (e.g., Orders of the day, Apr. 5; *Protokoly* of the 46th Divisional Committee, Mar. 30, etc.), since they are so arranged in the archive. Corps documents, which are not arranged chronologically, will be given by leaf ("l") number (the Soviet archival designation).

THE END OF
THE RUSSIAN IMPERIAL ARMY

CHAPTER I



TRADITION, CASTE, AND MODERNIZATION

THE RUSSIAN ARMY was the only institution of the old order to survive the debacle of the first days of March 1917. With the dynasty disappeared the old officialdom, the political and conventional police, the courts, the governors and the garrison commandants—all that had symbolized the autocracy to the popular mind. The Army and its command structure, though it too had suffered a grievous blow from which it was not to recover, had to be tolerated for the time being because of the war. The generals were a source of extreme anxiety to the revolutionary forces, who suspected restorationist plots at every hand and who erected the dikes of Order No. One and soldiers' committees as safety measures. Their anxiety is understandable. The Russian Imperial Army, more than any other institution, symbolized the durability of the autocracy through the centuries. The Army was the embodiment not merely of the empire's external strength, but also of its security against revolution and internal disorder. Without the Army, the rest of the elaborate bureaucratic and police framework could not have survived into the twentieth century.

Yet the monarchy and the Army were bound by far more than protective and physical ties—the bond was moral and spiritual as well. The two institutions had grown up together over the centuries and had become so mutually supportive and interdependent that the existence of one without the other was scarcely imaginable. The tsars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had forged Russian society into an instrument of warfare for the Muscovite state. The landed nobility was dignified as the exclusive military servitor class, less because of its military efficacy (which recent scholarship regards as yielding to the regiments

of foreign formation) than because virtually all functions of the state had become militarized and monopolized by the military estate. Bureaucratic posts bore equivalent rankings with the army, and their occupants were regarded as "on leave" from regular service (for example, province chiefs, the *voevodas*, bore the same title as commanders of regiments). The provincial military servitors, a diminishing component in the fighting army, were nevertheless indispensable as policemen and tax gatherers over their serfs. The system of ranking families, known as *mestnichestvo*, pertained originally to the right of command in the tsar's regiments on campaign. All this is to say that a military ethos and rationale pervaded the structure of the Russian state from its very foundation, and tsardom was both mortar and capstone.¹

Under Peter the Great the structure took on a secular and Western guise, but the bond of service to the tsar's person became, if anything, more intimate and absolute. True, the civilian and military hierarchies were formally separated, and in the course of the eighteenth century the service requirements became less burdensome, until in 1762 they were made entirely voluntary. Nevertheless, the sole marks of status and prestige in society were those of the Table of Ranks, of which the civilian gradations were but a pale imitation of the military. Other classes of society—merchants and townsmen of various grades, serfs, state peasants, and even the clergy, whose tutelage was symbolized by the lay procuratorship over the Holy Synod—though saddled with various heavy obligations toward the state, counted as nothing in the ascribed hierarchy of social worth. After 1762 noblemen could choose not to serve, retiring comfortably instead to familial estates, but they did so at the price of self-contempt and loss of status. In the course of the nineteenth century new measures of personal worth opened up, based on education, culture, and the autonomous secular professions, but the autocratic state denied them recognition, often surrounding them with controls and outright hostility. Only those who served the state were accorded marks of distinction, the uniform and decorations becoming the

¹ Most of these points come out in the classic account by V. O. Kliuchevskii, *A Course in Russian History: The Seventeenth Century* (Chicago, 1968), chaps. 6 and 7. For an excellent recent monograph on the service system of the seventeenth century and its conflict with the requirement of military efficiency, see Richard Hellie, *Enserfment and Military Change in Muscovy* (Chicago, 1971), esp. pp. 211ff.

universal badge of loyalty and status for the civilian bureaucracy as well as the military. Thus it remained for the duration of the empire.²



Through generations, the most direct and sacred bond of service to the person of the emperor was maintained by the officer corpora-tion of the regiments of the guards. Originating as the play regi-ments of Peter's childhood that engaged in war games in the vil-lages of Preobrazhenskoe and Semenovskoe, the guards units had multiplied, particularly in the reign of Alexander I, until by the late nineteenth century they comprised ten regiments of infantry (Preobrazhenskii, Semenovskii, Izmailovskii, Egerskii, Litovskii, Grenaderskii, Pavlovskii, Finlandskii, Keksgolmskii, and Peters-burgskii), ten of cavalry (Cavalier Guards, Horse Guards, Hus-sars, Cuirassiers, Ulans, Horse-Jaegers, Dragoons, Cossacks, Grod-nenskii Hussars, and Horse-Grenadiers), and several divisions of artillery, sappers, and other assorted units. Every occupant of the Russian throne, as well as male and female members of the im-perial family, held honorary commissions in one or more of the guards units and proudly wore its uniform on ceremonial occa-sions. Moreover, a young grand duke was expected to enroll and serve as an ordinary officer in his chosen regiment.³ The charade of the tsar as guards officer and boon companion was a legacy of the Petrine tradition that the sovereign also serves the state; but even more, it was a mark of imperial recognition of the guards' privileged status and peculiar loyalty to the throne.

The guards were an indispensable part of the pageantry of empire. Ceremonial brilliance had always predominated over mili-tary utility, and it enjoyed a considerable revival under Nicho-

² The system of ranking and career advancement in state service has only recently become an object of sociological investigation, primarily in con-nection with problems of modernization rather than with the social values of the system. See Hans-Joachim Torke, "Das russische Beamtentum in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts," *FO*, XIII (1967), 7-345, and the illumi-nating archival data in Walter Pintner, "The Social Characteristics of the Nineteenth Century Bureaucracy," *Slavic Review*, XXIX (1970), 429-43.

³ For a useful survey of the formation of guards units, see A. Zaitsev, "Istoricheskaia spravka o naimenovanii 'Leib-Gvardiei,'" *Semenovskii Biul-leten'*, no. 20 (Nov.-Dec. 1950), 3-10. The best source on the military mores of the imperial family is Grand Duke Alexander, *Once a Grand Duke* (New York, 1931), esp. chaps. 9 and 11.

las II after the more austere practices of his father. The guards' permanent barracks in the capital circled the Winter Palace, in whose inner vastness honor companies with their resplendent uniforms were eternally on guard. Summer maneuvers took place at Krasnoe Selo in the environs of the tsar's residence of Tsarskoe Selo, and attendance was a fixed part of imperial routine. The training aspect of these occasions, though lasting several months, was minimal and incidental to the reviews and parade ground exercises. In any event, the physical exertions fell exclusively on the soldiers and noncommissioned officers, whereas for the genteel officers the outings were largely country excursions made bearable by frequent invitations from the local gentry.

The truly serious preparations were reserved for the ceremonial review in the presence of the tsar, which in effect was an act of sacrament whereby the vows between sovereign and chosen servants were renewed. Spread out over the enormous parade ground of Krasnoe, the regiments were arranged in a thick tableau of line and color surrounding an elevated pavilion, the *tsarskaia valika*, on which were situated dignitaries, members of the royal family, the court, and honored guests. When the mounted figure of the tsar and the royal carriage of his consort flashed into view, the ocean of color snapped into frozen waves, followed smartly by the raising of myriads of gleaming swords and bayonets into the sun. In a routine little changed over generations, the tsar greeted each regiment in turn, the latter responding in deafening staccato: "We wish your health, your Imperial Highness!"—followed by wild hurrahs from every throat. The feeling of mystical exaltation at this moment, bordering on hysteria, has been well attested by observers. P. N. Krasnov, a former guardsman, portrays the event in his novel *From the Double Eagle to the Red Flag*:

Nature seemed to have waited for this powerful cheer, for this mighty hymn full of fervent prayer before beginning its work. An unseen force tore to pieces the mist, and the sun shone overhead as if purified by the previous rain. . . . The miracle was accomplished. The Sovereign anointed by God appeared in all his glory and beauty, beautiful as in a fairy tale on his grey Arab horse. . . . A demi-god was before the people and earthly thoughts left them. Their hearts soared high and felt near the heavens.⁴

⁴ Krasnov, *From the Double Eagle to the Red Flag* (New York, 1928),

The thought that an empire of such grandeur and ancient lineage would ever cease to exist could not be entertained by the votaries of this holy spectacle.

The preparation of guards officers for their appointed stations began very early in life. The inbreeding of guards families had been practiced for generations, and the outlines of a career—the school, the type of arms, even the regiment—were dictated from the time of birth. The elite school that supplied a good share of the fledglings for the guards regiments was the Corps of Pages. No longer merely grooming children of the two uppermost ranks for ceremonial functions (and soft careers) at court, it adopted during the reforms of the 1870s a curriculum and set of standards comparable to those of the cadet corps and the specialized military schools. As such it developed into a nursery for guards officers, assuming an ever larger share through expanded enrollments. Although Alexander III introduced examinations for entrance and advancement, connections and family service traditions were still necessary for admission (stipends were available for sons of aristocratic families that were temporarily in straitened circumstances), and poor marks on entrance examinations were not always an insurmountable obstacle.⁵

Postings to guards units that were not filled by graduates of the Corps of Pages were assigned to the top graduates of the elite professional military schools, namely, the Pavlovskii for the infantry, the Nikolaevskii for the cavalry, and the Konstantinovskii for the artillery. Although vacancies were announced in advance and supposedly filled in the order of examination scores, each candidate knew his place ahead of time and did not bid for positions that he knew had been reserved for others. In any event, each guards unit jealously passed on all newcomers according to a black ball system (quite literally), so that no fortuities could occur. Thus the aristocratic purity of the guards officer corps was not endangered; by one means or another, a candidate found his way to his "own" regiment.

p. 45. For other details, see the extensive memoir literature of guards officers, particularly A. A. Ignat'ev, *Piat' desair' let v stroiu*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1955), I, 90ff. and passim, and Paul Rodzianko, *Tattered Banners* (London, 1939), chap. 6.

⁵ Two helpful accounts of the rules of the system are A. A. Brusilov, *Moi vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1963), p. 18, and B. V. Gerua, *Vospominaniia o moei zhizni*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1969-1970), I, 30 and passim.

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Once received into a guards regiment, the newcomer fell into the easy routine of the officers' community. The cares of daily life were tended to by the orderlies, and relations with the soldiers and all routine military matters were handled by the eternal sergeant majors, who preferred that the gentlemen-officers not interfere. Much idle time was spent in the officers' club (*sobranie*), where there were billiards, cards, light reading matter, and adequate regalements. It was a life with few challenging objectives. To be too conscientious about professional military matters (riding and parade drill excepted) or to improve one's mind by reading (even military science) was regarded as bad taste. The chief events of regimental life (other than the round of reviews and maneuvers) were duels, suicides, and scandals. The root cause of all three could be reduced to cards, money, and women in various combinations. Affairs of honor were sanctioned by the system—from 1894, even regulated by law—but they seldom resulted in fatalities or serious injuries. Suicides could be occasioned by card debts, disappointment in love, social ostracism, or inability to redress an affair of honor—but, underlying all, boredom. Occurrences among young officers were apparently frequent and handled in a discrete, routine way.⁶

Such mores bred the traits of arrogance, cynicism, and incomprehension toward the outside world that were the hallmarks of the officers of the guards. Only in one domain were they not at all cynical: in their devotion to the idea of the monarchy and the performance of its rituals. The code of the guards officer is summed up by one of Krasnov's characters: "A Dieu mon âme, ma vie au roi, mon couer aux dames, l'honneur pour moi."⁷

The officers of the guards were thus a race apart within the Army and cultivated a peculiar awareness of their privileges, social origin, and special role as guardians of the throne. There was little intercourse or identity with the officer class as a whole, even when guardsmen served briefly in units of the line for the sake of advancement. Regular army officers who spent many years in the same regiment waiting for promotion by the sluggish system of seniority could only envy the guards officers who passed through their regiments and overtook them in rank.⁸ Al-

⁶ See Krasnov, p. 115, where it is so described.

⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

⁸ Until 1884 a first lieutenant of the guards could enter a line regiment with the rank of captain. His next promotion was to the rank of colonel,

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though elevation to high rank was not as certain for guards officers after the 1870s as it had been before the Miliutin reforms, the initial advantage of elite school training and guards status still served to propel them in disproportionate numbers into the upper military leadership. Some, of course, developed expertise and a sense of military professionalism through the exercise of command responsibility, and a good many went on to the General Staff Academy (which the guards officer corporation nevertheless tended to look upon with disdain), but even then they never ceased to be guards officers with a sense of special loyalty to their "native regiment" and their own kind.⁹ Their privileges and caste spirit were naturally resented by the larger body of officers, particularly the emergent class of educated professionals, with whom they could share no spirit of corporate solidarity based on common outlook and values. The existence of the guards regiments became increasingly incompatible with the requirements of modernization, and by the end of the nineteenth century they could be viewed as little more than an anachronism.

The preservation of the guards was the supreme symbol of the inadaptability of the autocratic system to the new world of fiercely competitive, technologically advanced powers, which were mobilizing to the utmost their democratized institutional structures to serve the Moloch of war. In effect, by the close of the nineteenth century the Russian monarchy had irrevocably committed itself to economic and military modernization, but it hedged against the accompanying social and political strains by cultivating the loyalty and self-esteem of the elite guards units. Thus Nicholas II restored much of the exterior brilliance and marks of

whereas a regular officer of the line had to be promoted to major and lieutenant colonel first. In 1884 the ranks of ensign (*praporshchik*) and major were eliminated, which had the effect of reducing the rank advantage of guards officers from two to one. See Hans-Peter Stein, "Der Offizier des russischen Heeres im Zeitalter zwischen Reform und Revolution," *FO*, XIII (1967), 404-5.

⁹ Gen. Gerua is an example of a guards officer of high aristocratic descent who, via the General Staff Academy, became an accomplished professional and eventually an instructor in the Academy. His memoirs betray that incorrigible sense of loyalty to the guards milieu, and he confesses that his relations with nonaristocratic general staff officers in the Kiev Military District, none of them of guards grooming, were strictly professional and not social, owing, as he explains, to the "social differences among our wives." *Op. cit.*, I, 217.

imperial favor that his more austere father had severely curtailed. The ceremonial reviews were more frequent and punctilious; color, gold braid, and the tsar's monogram were restored to the uniform; and the honorific title of adjutant general, held in abeyance in the previous reign, was again bestowed with a lavish hand. All this was not so much prudent political calculation as a web of romantic illusion that the tsar and his entourage drew around themselves as protection against the psychological shocks of a new order of things in which the values they represented were increasingly irrelevant.



The guards epitomized the autocratic system, but the Army as a whole gave structure and substance to the empire. The glorious memories of the Imperial Army were the wars of Peter and Catherine, which had rounded out the contours of the state territory, and the great contest with Napoleon, which had brought Russia to the pinnacle of power in Europe. The Army was obliged to rest for a long time on the laurels of Poltava, Kuchuk-Kainardzhi, and Leipzig, for the following century offered few gratifying sequels.¹⁰ The drawn-out campaigns in the Caucasus and Central Asia were essentially colonial wars against not-so-formidable native peoples, and they engaged the imagination of only a handful of imperialist dreamers (Chernaev, Skobelev, Kaufman), often, as with the chief rival empire, without the approval of the monarch or the foreign ministry. Of the three major wars—the Crimean, the Turkish, and the Japanese—the first and the last were outright catastrophes whose memories had to be effaced, and the second brought little satisfaction because the brilliant winter crossing of the Balkans was offset by otherwise incredibly poor military leadership, and because the fruits of victory were snatched away at the diplomatic table.

With such a dismal record, it was very difficult for the Army to

¹⁰ For conventional military history, I have relied chiefly on A. A. Kersnovskii, *Istoriia russkoi armii*, 3 vols. (Belgrade, 1933-1938). While his judgments on other than military subjects (and often on military as well) are somewhat idiosyncratic, he never fails to chronicle certain important types of information—new laws, changes in military administration, histories of campaigns and battles in the grand tradition—so that his is an exceedingly valuable reference work for a nonmilitary historian. Also very useful as a compilation of information, although lacking in verve and interesting viewpoint, is Soviet military historian L. G. Beskrovnyi's *Russkaia armia i flot v XIX veke* (Moscow, 1973).

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develop a sense of imperial pride that could lend cohesion and meaning to its efforts. Indeed, at the very apex of imperial consciousness, following the triumphal entry into Paris, Tsar Alexander himself smothered it with his passion for clocklike reviews, his experiment with military colonies, and his determination to tighten discipline after the laxities of the European campaign. The injured pride of his generational peers led ineluctably to the Semenovskii incident and the Decembrist affair.¹¹ To exorcise this spirit Nicholas I turned parade ground exercises, cruel discipline, and blind obedience into the foundation of the Army and of his reign. The enduring legacy was that very special aversion to politics, even to imperial politics, of the senior officers, who wanted nothing more than guaranteed promotions, a few decorations, and comfortable pensions, in exchange for which the tsar's word was their only law. The side effects were rampant incompetence and corruption and the total absence of a professional military spirit. Military efficiency was equated with the precise execution of intricate parade ground maneuvers, the highest reward of which was the expression of imperial pleasure. The Crimean War, of course, cruelly exposed the inadequacies of an army bred in such traditions, and reform became the necessary preoccupation of the subsequent reign. But it was many decades before the colonels and generals of the old type could be replaced by others more professionally educated, and something of the Nicolaevan spirit of pedantry and unreflective servility survived the best efforts at reform right up to the Great War and the final denouement.¹²

¹¹ The Semenovskii incident (October 1820) was a minor mutiny of soldiers against the harsh disciplinary regime of their new commander, Col. Shvarts. Young guards officers, some of them members of the secret societies, were not directly involved, but they expressed their sympathy by marching with their men to the Peter-Paul Fortress. Some historians attribute Alexander's turn toward reactionary policies to his shock over this incident. The conspiracy and uprising of December 14, 1825, in which guards officers were the prime movers, was far more serious, resulting in five executions and long terms of exile for most of the conspirators. Superficially, these young idealists were carried away by the constitutional principles of the American and French revolutions, but their depositions and personal accounts often betray a sense of deep humiliation that those who had established the greatness of the Russian Empire were not regarded as worthy of liberty, whereas the tsar had bestowed constitutions on Poland and defeated France. See Anatole Mazour, *The First Russian Revolution* (Berkeley, 1933), pp. 273-80 (documents).

¹² This is a general, impressionistic judgment, but the names of Generals

The recruitment and education of officers under Nicholas I tended toward a marked caste stratification, paralleling the social policies of the reign generally. Whereas all commissioned officers and every civil servant above the eighth rank (collegiate assessor) had formerly been ennobled automatically, in 1845 the legal definition was revised to require advancement to the eighth rank (major) in the Army and the fifth (state councilor) in the civilian service. Those remaining below this demarcation line were considered "personal nobles" and could not pass on their status to their children.¹³ Since a large number of junior officers were not of noble origin, the effect of the legislation was to create a new caste of self-perpetuating, unprivileged officers. Noble status, as determined by the new definition, was a requisite for admission to the cadet corps schools, which under Nicholas became the approved educational institutions for ambitious members of this class. These schools provided a fairly rigorous general education in a military environment up to the age of eighteen and promised automatic commissions, admission into the specialized military schools (artillery, engineering), and rapid promotion. Although their number grew to twenty-three by the end of Nicholas's reign, and although considerable means were lavished on them, they supplied only a fraction of the needed officers for the Army as a whole. Slightly over three hundred cadets graduated annually, and a good share of them went directly into the guards, cavalry regiments, or specialized military schools. Others, disappointed in their expectations, took sinecure civilian assignments or retired with a decent rank to their family estates. Only a small minority entered regiments of the line and followed the conventional route of promotion and service, even though their schooling entitled them to more rapid promotion. At the time of the Crimean War, slightly under 20 percent of the new officer cadres in the regiments were products of the cadet schools.¹⁴

The balance of the two thousand or so new officers required annually was supplied by the so-called junker system. Junkers

Sandetskii, Evert, and Ivanov, who figure later in our narrative, come to mind.

¹³ See Torke, *FO*, XIII, 84ff. In the civilian service, persons of nonaristocratic origin could acquire "personal nobility" only with the ninth rank; below that, they were classified as "honorary citizens." See *ibid.*, pp. 166-67.

¹⁴ See John Shelton Curtiss, *The Russian Army under Nicholas I* (Durham, N.C., 1965), p. 190, and Stein, *FO*, XIII, 362 and *passim*.

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were a class of officer recruits of heterogenous origin who by various rules were promoted to officer rank. Any nobleman's son could, without educational requirement, volunteer as a junker and after two years of service receive his commission; a junker volunteer of any class who had a secondary or university education required only six months for a commission, but the uneducated sons of personal nobles, honorary citizens, and guildsmen of the first two ranks needed six years. Soldiers promoted from the ranks to become noncommissioned officers (requiring twelve years of service without corporal punishment) could acquire commissions after twelve further years of service and an examination. Thus the officers of the junker class were very diverse by origin, and their advancement was determined by social origin and prior education. Their common denominator was a period of apprenticeship and a lack of any formal military schooling. The system provided a slender opportunity of upward mobility for a chosen few of menial origin (for example, General M. D. Skobelev and A. I. Denikin's father, who ended his life as a major, were the sons of serfs), but for the great mass of uneducated junkers it led to a life of penury, provincial boredom and frozen status in the lower officer grades.



The intended thrust of the reforms initiated by Dmitrii Miliutin in the 1870s was to overcome the built-in inertia of this two-track system of producing officers and to inject the benefits of technical military education, promotion by merit, and a sense of professionalism into the officer ranks.¹⁵ Miliutin succeeded only in part, for he faced formidable opposition not only from reactionary civilian bureaucrats but also from his military associates. He had in mind to create new professional military schools open to all persons who had a secondary education or who could pass an entrance examination. The cadet schools would be converted into civilian gymnasias under the Ministry of Education without class restrictions, whereas the professional military schools would offer a two- or three-year course in one of the several types of arms. Junkers from the ranks, it was thought, would be prepared for

¹⁵ For the Miliutin reforms, see Forrest A. Miller, *Dmitrii Miliutin and the Reform Era in Russia* (Charlotte, N.C., 1968), esp. chap. 4; P. A. Zaionchkovskii, *Voennye reformy 1860-70 gg.* (Moscow, 1952); and Kersnovskii, II, 385-411.

admittance by special courses to be established by the respective military districts. The ultimate consequence of this reform would have been a drastic modification of the caste principle and considerable upward mobility within the lower orders based on merit. Prospective officers of all social origins would acquire an incentive to prepare themselves educationally, and a uniform system of professional training would have been realized.

Miliutin's efforts fell considerably short of this goal, however. The cadet schools, which were financed and promoted in part by voluntary efforts, had become a highly treasured institution of the nobility, and Miliutin's colleagues, who were products of this system, felt that it inculcated the desired martial and monarchical virtues. The cadet schools were retained in modified form as "military gymnasias," but under Alexander III they resumed their old designation and characteristics. The only concessions, reversed in 1882, were that academic subjects were to be taught by competent civilian, rather than military, instructors and that the daily routine was less regimented.

Miliutin had his way with the higher military schools (*voennye uchilishchi*). These were established for the infantry and cavalry on a par with the ones already existing for artillery and military engineers, to which the chief burden of professional military training was transferred. Several of the best cadet schools were converted into military schools: the Pavlovskii and Aleksandrovskii for the infantry, and the Nikolaevskii for the cavalry. The Konstantinovskii cadet school began as a third infantry school, but in the next reign it was converted into an artillery school, while the existing artillery school was promoted to a higher academy. A special dispensation permitted the Corps of Pages to combine cadet school preparation with professional training in all three types of arms (infantry, cavalry, and artillery).¹⁶ Noble origin remained a requirement for admission to these schools, although the graduates of both military and civilian gymnasias were to be accepted as applicants.

To compensate for the retention of the class principle in the elite schools, volunteers or junkers from the ranks were to be given the opportunity of professional military training by the establishment of special schools for junkers. These were to be administered by the respective military districts, and entrance was to be by examination and recommendation from one's regiment. Under this

¹⁶ See Gerua, I, 19.

system, junkers could become commissioned only by undertaking a two-year course in one of these schools. This innovation actually curtailed upward mobility for some nonnobles, since prior education gave a built-in advantage for passing the entrance examinations (even though they were confined to elementary subjects). Other legislation did, however, upgrade the four-year cantonist schools for soldiers' children, although at the same time the number of these schools was substantially reduced.¹⁷ By the end of the 1870s the social composition of the junker schools by origin was approximately 64 percent hereditary nobles, 22 percent personal nobles, and 14 percent *raznochintsy* (middle class, clergy, and peasants).¹⁸ In contrast to the professional military schools, the junker schools placed considerable emphasis on general academic subjects, especially mathematics, language and geography, in order to equalize somewhat the disparity in education between the junkers and the graduates of the gymnasia. By the end of the reign they were already performing their appointed function of affording the bulk of the officer cadres a respectable degree of professional and general education; nevertheless, the means expended on them was niggardly in comparison with that lavished on the military gymnasia.

Naturally the graduates of junker schools were beset with considerable career disadvantages vis-à-vis their aristocratic counterparts, but one of Miliutin's significant victories over the reactionaries was that junker graduates who had seen four years of active service acquired the right to compete in entrance examinations to the General Staff Academy on equal terms with applicants from the elite military schools. (The same privilege was obtained for entrance into the higher artillery and engineering academies, but not for the Nikolaevskii Cavalry School, which remained the preserve of the cadet school aristocracy and the Cossacks.) The marked contrast in the quality of the two educational systems prevented most graduates of the junker schools from taking advantage of this privilege, but it was an opening wedge that a later generation, after the turn of the century, was able to employ to

¹⁷ F. A. Miller, p. 139.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 135. The term *raznochintsy*, though literally meaning "from the various ranks," was used in official parlance for a certain nondescript category of the lower-class urban population. But the term came to be applied more loosely to any member of the lower social orders who moved into the milieu of cultured or official Russia, and this is the sense in which it is employed in this work.

break down the aristocratic exclusivity of the generals' corporation.

A significant contribution of the Miliutin reforms was to vest the Military Academy with exclusive responsibility for preparing officers of the general staff, who henceforward were to comprise the majority of the higher military leadership.¹⁹ In spite of the prestige lent to it by its founder, the military theorist of the Napoleonic era, Antoine Henri Jomini, the Military Academy had been the stepchild of Nicholas I's army. It failed to produce more than a handful of capable graduates (among them, however, Miliutin) and did not confer prestigious status or guarantee inspiring careers.²⁰ The general staff so-called was merely an administrative branch of the War Department for quartermaster and topographical affairs. Nicholas's appointments to it showed that he was more concerned that it remain under the control of strict taskmasters than that men of talent be given administrative responsibility. Toward the end of the reign few officers applied for this branch of military service, knowing that it would lead only to a colonel's rank at best.

Under Miliutin's patronage the Military Academy (renamed the Nicholas Academy of the General Staff) was transformed into a respectable institution of higher military education and infused the entire Army (and not just the Quartermaster Department) with a new cadre of educated senior officers. Special examinations at the conclusion of the course admitted a certain number (later fixed at a ratio of 50 percent) to general staff status. These men were given a smart uniform and attractive assignments; others who completed the course but did not qualify by examination scores were reassigned to command positions with one rank advantage in promotion. General staff officers characteristically began their careers on the staffs of divisions and corps, served a year or two in a command position at the level of captain, then passed on to staff positions at a military district headquarters or in the Main Administration of the General Staff in St. Petersburg, where they worked up to the rank of colonel. From there, command of a regiment or appointment as chief of staff to a division, leading

¹⁹ See Kersnovskii, II, 402, and Stein, *FO*, XIII, 401ff. None of the works I consulted gives more than a modicum of information on this important reform; it undoubtedly deserves further investigation.

²⁰ See Curtiss, pp. 104-6.

to a general's rank by the age of forty, was not an unlikely prospect.²¹

Nevertheless, the general staff did not become the all-powerful secret brain of the Army, swayed by a uniform military doctrine and sense of mission, as it did in Prussia. The chief of the Main Administration of the General Staff was essentially a figurehead who was subordinate to the War Ministry, and his appointment was not always free of the besetting sin of imperial favoritism. He did not have the right of direct report to the sovereign, nor was he necessarily Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief in time of war. The system was not yet ready for a Moltke.²²



After the Russo-Turkish War the Imperial Army entered another period of doldrums. Diplomatic isolation and fiscal considerations dictated a pacific foreign policy and modest technical improvements. A whole generation of military leadership, lacking the prospect of active military experience, acclimatized itself to a routine, stationary life. Alexander III's War Minister, General P. S. Vannovskii, was an unimaginative bureaucrat, although he is credited with achieving considerable economies and curbing corruption in the supply services. Those who contributed significantly to Russia's military development during this period were General I. V. Gurko, a hero of the Balkan campaigns and the capable chief of the strategic Warsaw Military District, General M. I. Dragomirov, chief of the General Staff Academy until 1889 and thereafter of the Kiev Military District, and General N. N. Obruchev, chief of the General Staff Administration until 1897. Under the latter the fortifications of the western border provinces were brought up to a high level of engineering technology and serviced by a network of paved roads and railroads. He also introduced regular large-scale maneuvers, opposing the forces of different military districts against one another.

In the early 1890s the infantry was rearmed with the Mosin rifle, a magazine-loaded weapon with a range and ballistic qualities

²¹ See Gerua, I, 149-53 and *passim*, and A. I. Denikin, *Staraia armia*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1929-1931), I, 52-90. Both give excellent glimpses into the career patterns of general staff officers.

²² See Kersnovskii, II, 456.

to match the best in Europe at the time.²³ The artillery was equipped with rapid-firing, breech-loading guns in time for them to be of service in the war with Japan (machine guns arrived only after the main battles had been fought). The fate of the cavalry arm was the particular lament of military writers: a "reform" of the 1880s dispensed with plumed helmets, lances, and formation charges, as well as with the enchanting distinctions between cuirassiers, hussars, and ulans. All regiments were designated as dragoons, which for proud traditionalists was the equivalent of "infantry who ride horses."²⁴

In all other respects, however, the Russian Army continued to suffer to the end of the century from the general stagnation of the period of counterreform. The fault lay not only with the recrudescence of prereform tendencies, but also with the performance of the citadel of military learning itself, the General Staff Academy. The Academy's curriculum tended to be overloaded with military administration, long outdated military history, and academic subjects such as geology, astronomy, and foreign languages, producing an overabundance of bureaucrats and scholars and too few skilled tacticians and leaders.²⁵ It would be unfair, however, to lay the blame for these failures on General Dragomirov, the Academy's head from 1881 to 1889. As a young commander Dragomirov had experimented extensively with field tactics and the training of soldiers, which he applied fruitfully in the Turkish War and subsequently brought to a high level of perfection in the Kiev Military District. A fanatical partisan of Suvorov, he felt that the strength of an army was measured by the morale and fighting spirit of its soldiers as well as by the leadership qualities of its commanders. However, the obverse of this doctrine was its antipathy to modernization and technological innovation. The

²³ For this period, see *ibid.*, III, 598ff. On the Mosin rifle, see Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armiia*, pp. 313-18. It was still in use in the Soviet Army at the beginning of World War II. See P. A. Zaionchkovskii, *Samoderzhavie i russkaia armiia na rubezhe XIX-XX stoletii* (Moscow, 1973), p. 158.

²⁴ Gen. V. A. Sukhomlinov, then a bright young star with both guards and general staff credentials, decried this "massacre of the cavalry." He researched Sukhotin's claim that Friedrich the Great endorsed firing from the saddle and discovered the following in one of his orders: "Eimal in der Woche sind die Kürassiere im Pistolenschiessen vom Pferde zu üben, damit diese Hundsfüter die Ungefährlichkeit solches Schiessens erkennen." *Vospominaniia* (Berlin, 1924), p. 53.

²⁵ See Kersnovskii, III, 510.

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general was said to have been staunchly opposed to the introduction of the magazine-loading rifle, and in his dotage he was positively rabid over machine guns and rapid-fire artillery. He was an incurable military romantic, already out of place in the setting of the 1890s, but by force of character he continued to exercise strong influence over the younger generation of military leaders.²⁶

Dragomirov's counterpart in the field of strategy was General G. A. Leer, who held the professorial chair in the subject from the beginning of the reform era and headed the Academy from 1889 to 1899. A scholar of matchless erudition, he insisted that the changeless principles of sound strategy were to be gleaned from careful study of the campaigns of Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Caesar, and Napoleon.²⁷

Obruchev, Dragomirov, and Leer were refreshing innovators in the reform era, imposing authorities in the 1880s, but obstacles to progress thereafter. No new winds wafted from the Academy until after the Russo-Japanese War, while iron and steel, dreadnaughts and railroads, newspapers, popular education, and parliaments were adding new dimensions to the character of modern warfare.²⁸



The tenure of General A. N. Kuropatkin as War Minister from 1898 to the Russo-Japanese War can be regarded as a minor period of reform. He certainly had more imposing credentials than any of his predecessors, being a supremely well-educated general staff officer and having served in the Balkan campaigns and in Central Asia as chief of staff to the immortal Skobelev. Moreover, he had achieved his high office without court connections or a career in the guards. He worked out a five-year projection of

²⁶ For characterizations of Dragomirov, see *ibid.*, p. 507, Sukhomlinov, pp. 50-60, and Denikin, *Staraia armia*, I, 34-36.

²⁷ On Leer, see Beskrovnyi, *Ocherki voennoi istoriografii Rossii* (Moscow, 1962), pp. 203-8, and brief references in works already cited.

²⁸ In Denikin's formulation: "'Armed peoples' replaced standing armies, and this circumstance foreshadowed sharp changes in the future tactics of mass. Into the old schemes erupted a new factor as yet untested—rapid-firing artillery. This rendered obsolete the still current teaching on fortress defense of the borders. Outside the Academy, life and work went on; in the heat of controversy, the contemporary press sought new truths. But all this movement found insufficient response in the Academy, which stuck rigidly in its accustomed repose." *Staraia armia*, I, 56.

badly needed capital improvements in the organization and equipment of the Army, which included the rearming of the artillery, the reorganization of the supply and sanitary services, improved pay and conditions of service for junior officers, and the buildup of strategic readiness in key border areas (Poland and the Turkestan and Amur districts). Finance Minister S. Iu Witte was not particularly sympathetic to these importunities: scarcely a third of Kuropatkin's requested sum was allocated, and most of that was drained off by the counterproductive ventures in the Far East.²⁹

Socially, the most significant innovation of the Kuropatkin years was the promotion of the junker schools to full parity in instruction and standards with the professional military schools. Not only did this measure enhance military efficiency, but it also accelerated the advance of nonnobles into officer ranks and, as Peter Kenéz has admirably demonstrated, fundamentally altered the caste character of the higher military leadership in the last two decades before the Revolution.³⁰ The Moscow and Kiev junker schools had already taken this step in 1888 and 1893, respectively, and the rewards had been so great in terms of attracting educated middle-class youth to military careers that it overcame class predilections. Professional soldiers of lower-class background and inferior education found it all the harder to enter the junker schools on a competitive basis, but those who succeeded were the most highly motivated professionally.³¹ In addition to improvements in salary and service conditions, this reform went a long way toward converting the junior-grade officer corps from a semieducated, impoverished caste into a reasonably homogenous professional elite.

The results of this measure were quickly apparent in the type of men recruited as officers and the morale of the lower officer

²⁹ See *Zapiski generala Kuropatkina o rusko-iaponskoi voine. Itogi voiny* (Berlin, 1909), pp. 119-20. Kuropatkin became the official and unofficial scapegoat for the military failures of the Russo-Japanese War, and thus a good many apocryphal errors have been ascribed to him. Portraits in the literature must be treated with a certain reserve. His own writings, chiefly his *Zapiski* and his diary ("Dnevnik A. N. Kuropatkina," *KA*, II [1922], 5-122, and "Iz dnevnika Kuropatkina," *KA*, VII [1924], 55-69), make a good impression with their many convincing observations touching Russia's military shortcomings. For a fair and balanced portrait based on extensive unpublished material, see P. A. Zaionchkovskii, *Samoderzhavie i russkaia armia*, pp. 67-77.

³⁰ See "A Profile of the Pre-Revolutionary Officer Corps," *California Slavic Studies*, VII (1973), 121-58.

³¹ See Denikin, *Staraia armia*, II, 8.

grades. In 1894, 53 percent of the trainees in the junker schools were still of noble origin, but by 1905 the ratio had dropped to 37 percent.³² Whereas the effect of the Miliutin reforms had actually been to increase the percentage of officer recruits from the nobility by establishing and expanding the professional military schools (still virtually purely noble in composition), the Kuropatkin reform dramatically reversed this process. In the late 1890s the ratio of officer graduates between the professional military schools and the junker schools was 55:45, but in 1906 these figures were almost exactly reversed (44:56).³³ Considering that virtually all the graduates of junker schools were lifelong career officers, whereas a good percentage of the professional school products were siphoned into civilian careers or inactive appointments in guards regiments, it is apparent that the lower officer corps was rapidly becoming the preserve of educated *raznochintsy*.

Prior to this reform, the graduates of the junker schools seldom advanced beyond the level of captain, unless by dint of extraordinary effort they could gain entrance to the General Staff Academy. Formally, entrance to the Academy was based on examinations after four or five years as an officer in the line, but until the upgrading of the junker schools there was only a marginal possibility for *raznochintsy* to compete successfully. Denikin depicts the depressing atmosphere that pervaded the military districts, where hordes of junior officers strained their modest intellectual backgrounds to pass the rigorous entrance exams in the vain hope of escaping a life of foreordained poverty, only to fall victim to the successive hurdles. Of the 1,500 or so hopefuls taking the annual tests, only a third were sent on to St. Petersburg, 140-150 were finally admitted, less than 100 survived to the third year of the course, and a mere 50 were ultimately admitted to the general staff. Those who failed the last hurdle still enjoyed a rank advantage over their erstwhile peers, so that a colonel's shoulder boards were a not unreasonable prospect (a few, such as P. A. Lechitskii, became outstanding generals).³⁴

³² Kenez, *California Slavic Studies*, vii, 127.

³³ P. A. Zaionchskovskii, *Samoderzhavie i russkaia armiia*, p. 170, and Kenez, *California Slavic Studies*, vii, 127. Denikin cites figures showing a ratio of 26:74 for the 1880s and 45:55 for 1895, which means that the professional military schools overtook the junker schools only toward the very end of the century. *Staraia armiia*, ii, 10.

³⁴ See Denikin, *Staraia armiia*, i, 58.

Nevertheless, the new types entered the narrow gates, crowding in on the privileged elements in significant numbers. Kenez cites striking archival data that show that as early as 1902-1903 the entering class in the Academy numbered twice as many nonnobles as nobles. Undoubtedly, a selective process operated in the halls of the Academy to weed out the *raznochintsy*, and the inexplicable delay in Denikin's own appointment to the general staff has overtones of such a mechanism (he filed a complaint with the War Ministry and was told in confidence that "it was probably to make room for one of the mamma's boys").³⁵ Despite such subtle and not-so-subtle pressures, once the junker schools began to produce graduates who were as proficient as those of the professional military schools, the flow of *raznochintsy* into the higher military leadership via the Academy could no longer be arrested. Denikin's profile of Academy graduates in 1913 tells the story: only 38.2 percent had begun their education in the cadet schools and 61.8 percent in civilian institutions; 60.7 percent had come through the professional military schools (which were admitting significant numbers from civilian gymnasia and, apparently, nonnobles as well), but only 48 percent of all graduates were hereditary nobles, and only 19 percent of these were from the guards.³⁶ These advances had occurred in spite of a marked retrograde movement after 1905 in terms of *admissions* to the Academy (Kenez notes 32 percent of noble origin in 1902, 58 percent in 1906, 47 percent in 1907, 38 percent in 1908, and 51 percent in 1909).³⁷

Thus, despite Nicholas's inclination to favor aristocratic elements, the upper military leadership was progressively penetrated by the professionally motivated, upwardly mobile bourgeoisie. Because of the long lead time (around twenty years on the average), this shift did not show up before the First World War in the generals' rank. In 1914, 87 percent of the generals in the infantry and a considerably higher percentage of those in other branches of arms were of noble origin (over 50 percent of them were guardsmen); 63 percent of the colonels in the infantry were nobles, as were 85 percent of those in the cavalry and artillery. Of 45,582 officers in the Imperial Army on the eve of the Great War, 51.3 percent were of noble origin—*only 40 percent* in the infantry—and virtually all had both a secondary and a professional mili-

³⁵ *Put' russkogo ofitsera* (New York, 1953), p. 105, and Kenez, *California Slavic Studies*, VII, 140.

³⁶ *Staraia armia*, II, 13.

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

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tary education.³⁸ This may be contrasted with the figures for 1895, which show that 72.8 percent of the officer corps as a whole and 66.6 percent of infantry officers alone were of noble origin.³⁹ Combining the data of Kenez and Zaionchkovskii on the inferior social categories allows one to make the instructive comparison in Table 1.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF NONNOBLE OFFICERS IN 1895 AND 1911

Social Origin	1895		1911	
	Army as a Whole (%)	Infantry (%)	Army as a Whole (%)	Infantry (%)
Honorary citizens	5.60	6.50	13.50	14.60
Clergy	5.90	7.80	4.20	4.40
Merchants	1.85	1.87	3.50	2.87
<i>Meshchane</i> (townsmen)	6.90	8.95	25.50*	34.43*
Peasants, soldiers' sons, and Cossacks	5.90	7.40		
Total nonnobles	26.15	32.50	46.70	56.30

* Data for 1911 combine the *meshchane* with the peasants.

The military had long since ceased to be the private preserve of the landholding nobility. Of 266 generals for whom data are available for the year 1903, 96 percent were classified as "hereditary nobility," but only 10 percent (27) possessed inherited estates, and another 5 percent (13) had acquired property through purchase, marriage, or imperial favor. In other words, 85 percent of the 266 generals were not property owners at all. A similar breakdown for major generals of the general staff reveals that 91

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 132, 137. One could compile a long list of distinguished generals in the First World War who were of nonnoble origin and who began their careers as junkers and advanced via the General Staff Academy (Denikin, Stankevich, Gerngross, Sivers, M. V. Alekseev, Sytin, etc.).

³⁹ Kenez's figures do not fully reflect upward social mobility in the officer corps because they do not register separately the category of personal nobles. However, a table in P. A. Zaionchkovskii, *Samoderzhavie i russkaia armiia*, pp. 204-5, reveals that the Army officer corps as a whole contained 22% personal and 50.8% hereditary nobility, and that the infantry leadership alone contained 27% and 39.5%, respectively. (An officer of nonnoble origin acquired hereditary nobility only with the rank of colonel.)

percent possessed no land or property, not even an urban dwelling.⁴⁰

These surprising statistics confirm the extent to which professionalization based on education had become universal in the half century since the reform era. The final logical step to erase all distinction between the junker and professional military schools was taken in 1911, when both were uniformly designated *voennye uchilishchi*. It should be pointed out, however, that the education process itself continued to perpetuate social divisions, no longer simply between noble and nonnoble, but also between the urban professional and middle classes and the lower orders (peasants, clergy, *meshchane*, and soldiers' children). As education increasingly became the touchstone of career promotion, the educational disability of the lower orders became an ever more formidable obstacle, but little was done to mitigate this inequity.

Nevertheless, professionalization via education was not the equivalent of promotion based on merit. Education and educational performance determined the level at which one mounted the promotional ladder, but beyond that point seniority, tempered by favoritism, was the universal rule. High marks in one of the military schools enabled a candidate to skip a rank initially but did not thereafter entitle him to be promoted out of turn. After a specified number of years of service, an officer was allowed to enter the lists for promotion to the next rank, but vacancies were filled strictly by seniority within the peer group. Thus officers could rest on their oars once the educational shoals were passed with little risk to their subsequent careers. According to Gerua, a reasonably fair commentator, many general staff officers degenerated into paper pushers, secure in their privileged status.⁴¹ Thus the military hierarchy still provided a refuge for a good many armchair commanders and timeservers, and no corrective mechanism was available. Solzhenitsyn had good reason to assert that "the ruin of the Russian Army was the system of seniority."⁴²



The soldier recruits in the Imperial Army from Peter to Nicholas I had been drawn exclusively from the bonded peasantry and

⁴⁰ See P. A. Zaionchkovskii, "Soslovnyi sostav ofitser'skogo korpusa na rubezhe XIX-XX vekov," *IS*, No. 1, 1973, pp. 151-52, and idem, *Samo-derzhavie i russkaia armiia*, pp. 207-10.

⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, I, 150-53, 196.

⁴² *Avgust chetyrnadtsatogo* (Paris, 1971), p. 105.

the rural and urban commoners who paid the head tax. To those unfortunate enough to be selected by their masters or communes, recruitment meant a lifetime of professional soldiering and permanent separation from family and village. Departing recruits were mourned by their fellow villagers as if condemned to death; older villagers conducted them bound and moaning to the district town, plied them liberally with vodka, and handed them over to the recruiting officer.⁴³ The crude discipline, the inhuman punishments, the callous indifference to basic amenities, and other carry-overs from serfdom are so well known as not to require elaboration. The distinguishing feature of this army was that the soldiers constituted a separate social caste; that is, they ceased to be peasants and had no other life to look forward to except that of a soldier (the twenty-five-year term was reduced to twenty years in 1834). The advantages of this system for the state were that military skills and values could be thoroughly inculcated, and that in the event of war trained manpower could be deployed immediately to the field with equipment. Its disadvantages were that it was expensive to maintain in peacetime and that there were no trained reserves. Again, the costly lesson of the Crimean War brought about reform.

The pressing need for peace and economy in the early years of the reign of Alexander II meant that the problem of reserves did not need to be faced immediately. The Army, swollen to over 2,000,000 men during the Crimean War, was reduced to 800,000 by 1862, the bulk of them veterans. Even without new levies and the retirement of those who had served more than thirteen years, a trained reserve of 548,448 remained at the end of the decade.⁴⁴ But the breathtaking successes of the Prussian Army in 1866 and 1870 suggested the urgent need for a long-term solution to the problem of trained reserves that would also take into account the new free status of the peasant.



With the exception of the emancipation of the serfs, the military conscription law of 1874 was the most radical social measure of the reform era. It proclaimed the principle of universal military obligation for all male subjects regardless of class, and although

⁴³ For a discussion of this system, see Curtiss, pp. 233ff. On the village drama that accompanied the taking of recruits, see Leo Tolstoy's short story *Polikushka* (1863) in *Short Novels of Tolstoy*, ed. Philip Rahv (New York, 1946), pp. 341-405.

⁴⁴ F. A. Miller, p. 192, and Kersnovskii, II, 395.

deferments and shortened terms were granted on the basis of education, there were no absolute exceptions. Since budgetary and other considerations made it inexpedient to train all young men of draftable age, liberal exemptions were granted for family situation: only sons, sole breadwinners of the father's (or even the grandfather's) family, and even second breadwinners were exempted, but not the heads and sole breadwinners of newly established families. Those remaining in the pool were drafted by lot until the required annual levies were met; under Alexander II these remained around 150,000, but in the subsequent reign they were increased to 235,000.⁴⁵ About 48 percent of the young men turning twenty-one were exempted by family situation, and another 25 percent were released by lot. The aim was to maintain a constant peacetime force of around 800,000 and a trained reserve of 550,000. It was argued that since an illiterate peasant takes longer to train, and since Russia's poor railroads and greater distances impeded the speedy mobilization of reserves, a large standing force was required; thus the period of active service was set at six years (compared with Prussia's three) and reserve service at nine years. In 1888, to economize on costs and increase the wartime reserve, active service was reduced to four years, but the period of reserve status was extended to eighteen; after the Russo-Japanese War the active period was reduced to three years and the reserve status to fifteen, but for five additional years (to age forty-three) reservists were regarded as subject to the Russian equivalent of the Prussian *Landwehr*, that is, subject to call in case of extreme necessity in wartime.

Young men who were not drafted were placed in two classifications of militia (*ratniki opolcheniia*) according to family situation and were designated by age group to be wartime replacements after the trained reserve had been depleted. The first category (*razriad*) was put on a par with the thirty-nine to forty-three age group of reservists as first-line replacements, while those in the second category, if called, were to be given assignments only in the rear. No provision was made for training the *ratniki* or for assigning them to specific units; if called upon in wartime, they would enter a common pool in the military districts and would hastily be taught to carry a rifle.

This system was designed to accommodate the extended family

⁴⁵ Kersnovskii, III, 501.

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structure of the peasantry, from which the largest body of recruits would be drawn, but the incongruities that would arise in wartime were not anticipated. True, a six-year term from ages twenty-one to twenty-seven was not overly disruptive of peasant family life and was certainly a welcome contrast to the older system. Even if a drafted youth were married and had small children, the pattern whereby daughters-in-law became a part of the father's family was well established, and most men did not establish separate households earlier than age twenty-seven. But in wartime every trained male up to the age of thirty-nine would immediately be called up on mobilization, no matter how heavy his family responsibilities had become in the meantime. At the same time, the 75 percent of the male villagers of all age groups and family conditions who had never seen service were not subject to call until the trained reserve was exhausted. Thus, many healthy young bachelors who had qualified as second breadwinners in small families or who had been exempted by lot were free of obligation, while large families could be deprived of their sole adult breadwinner; even a forty-three-year-old head of a large family, if he had been in the reserve, would be called up with the first category of *ratniki*, while his healthy son, if he were in the second category, might be exempted.

The Russo-Japanese War revealed the magnitude of these inequities—and the potential for revolutionary dissatisfaction—but the lesson was not learned: the same system, with minor changes, was employed in 1914 with the same consequences. General Golovin claims that such inequities made it impossible to inculcate a sense of the duty of every citizen to defend his fatherland; indeed, the system resembled a lottery little different from the prereform system. The peasant felt that he had either escaped from or fallen victim to an onerous form of involuntary servitude.⁴⁶ The point is well taken, although there were other, more fundamental reasons why the peasants remained disinclined to go soldiering and unmoved by the idea of a "nation in arms."

The principle of universal military liability meant that families of every social class had to concern themselves with how their sons would meet or evade the obligation. Of course, the generous

⁴⁶ See N. N. Golovin, *Voennye usiliia v mirovoi voine*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1939), I, 16. For other points in this discussion, see *ibid.*, chaps. 1 and 2.

curtailment of the term of active service based on education (six months for those with university degrees, eighteen months for gymnasium graduates) and the readily available option of becoming a junker or a volunteer meant that military service for the upper classes was unlikely to be too distasteful. To make it possible not to serve in the ranks on a par with uncultured peasants and townsmen, a special status was created for volunteers who had six years of gymnasium education and who were between seventeen and twenty-one years of age. The term was one year of regular training (after 1912, two), at the conclusion of which one was commissioned as an ensign (*praporshchik*) of the reserves and became subject to infrequent training periods and wartime service. The status carried certain privileges: the volunteer could select his unit, was exempt from work details, was not obliged to live in the barracks, and was addressed by officers and sergeants with the formal *Vy*, not the familiar *ty*, or as "Volunteer So-And-So." Otherwise they were subject to the same regulations as privates and ate from the same mess. This institution became the standard refuge for educated *raznochintsy*, but members of the high nobility who were pursuing nonmilitary careers occasionally resorted to it. The latter, if well connected, could choose guards regiments. Prince A. Lobanov-Rostovsky, who belonged to one of the most distinguished service families in Russia and was predestined for a diplomatic career, entered military service as a volunteer in the Guards Sappers Regiment on the eve of the First World War. The sergeants addressed him as "Volunteer Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky," and he marched, served guard duty, and ate the simple fare of ordinary soldiers. In his free time he was not allowed to attend the theater, to visit restaurants (not even with his aristocratic mamma), or to enter a house by the front door.⁴⁷

As one might suspect, the volunteers were incorrigible civilians in uniform and an awkward presence in the military environment. Sometimes they were grossly abused by sergeants with the encouragement of superiors; at other times, especially in provincial areas, they were received as equals by their officers and as eligible young bachelors by local society. Conservatives objected to them as a suspect intelligentsia who might infect the soldiers with revolutionary ideas, but their obvious privileges were barriers to such a role. Many young radicals did serve a turn as volunteers, which

⁴⁷ See *The Grinding Mill* (New York, 1935), pp. 6ff.

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familiarized them with the military milieu and suggested the importance of neutralizing the army in future revolutionary struggles. Fedor Stepun, in his youth a volunteer in an artillery unit, was half-jokingly asked by his superior officer as he and his companions were to go into town: "So where are you free-spirit bomb throwers headed for now? for the pub, or your conspiratorial headquarters?"⁴⁸ One of Stepun's fellow volunteers was indeed a revolutionary (the year was 1900), but he soon provoked an incident with an officer and was gratefully discharged as "an incurable epileptic."

As a means of inculcating among the educated classes a sense of civic responsibility for the defense of the fatherland, this system was, in Golovin's estimate, just as ineffective as the one for the lower classes. The shorter terms and volunteer status smacked of privilege, and whole categories of professions, such as teachers, doctors, and veterinarians, were exempted altogether (curiously, the clergy, unless specifically requested by their superiors, were not). Thus, a smaller percentage of the educated classes (not reckoning professional officers) than of the population at large was obliged to perform military service. Golovin claims that 2.8 percent of the annual contingent of draftees enjoyed some reduction of term based on educational qualifications, and that one-tenth of these, or 0.28 percent, represented graduates with gymnasias or higher degrees; Kenez calculates that 0.2 percent of all educated men of draftable age became volunteers. Combining these two figures, one can estimate that roughly 2,700 educated *raznochintsy* entered the army annually as ordinary soldiers and volunteers in the period before 1905 and that a somewhat greater number entered thereafter (the annual contingent almost doubled). That 20,740 reserve officers were mobilized in 1914—one for every two professional officers—and that all of them were former volunteers is a measure of the importance of the intellectual element in the Army in the war that brought revolution.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia*, 2 vols. (New York, 1956), I, 68. The term *volnye bombomety* was a double play on words, first on the word for volunteer (*volnoopredeliushchii*), and second, on the word for bombardier. Only an officer of the rare liberal type would have allowed himself this casual jest.

⁴⁹ See Golovin, I, 43, and Kenez, *California Slavic Studies*, VII, 145. The pre-1905 figure is computed on the basis of a table for the annual contingent in *Beskrovnyi, Russkaia armia*, p. 94. The 1914 total is from Kenez, p. 146.

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Once universal military obligation became the rule, the social composition of the Army necessarily reflected that of Russia as a whole. Whereas under Nicholas I it was composed of two relatively closed castes that seldom interacted with civilian society, after 1905 no less than 20 percent of the adult males over age twenty-seven in each major social group had been processed through its ranks and back into civilian life. These were heads of households and authoritative voices in the village commune, older experienced workers in the factories, and proprietors of small shops and trades, as well as merchants of the first two ranks, lower officialdom, butchers, bakers, etc. In the Army they experienced a life quite different from their respective social milieux: they learned how to handle weapons and function as part of a complicated human mechanism, and a good many exercised responsibility as noncommissioned officers.⁵⁰

The social consequences of this fundamental fact are seldom brought out in the literature, but their import cannot be overestimated. Peasants' revolts from the Time of Troubles to the Chigirin affair of 1877 had typically been led by ex-soldiers.⁵¹ The strikes and agrarian disturbances of the end of the nineteenth century appear largely as the actions of anonymous masses, but the military experience of many of the participants was doubtless put to good account. This is borne out by the reports of governors and other officials on agrarian disturbances and factory strikes. In 1891 there were no less than eight major instances of village disorders requiring the repressive action of two or more companies of soldiers, usually infantry from nearby garrisons. The agitated villagers were invariably armed with pitchforks and axes in defense of their rights to forests, meadows, and ponds claimed

⁵⁰ Though the military literature says little about NCOs, it is clear that most were not long-term professional soldiers but recruits with a smattering of education and leadership qualities. Reenlistment of NCOs was officially encouraged, but the effort was not very successful. Golovin, I, 49, points out that in the Russian Army there was an average of 2 reenlisted NCOs per company, whereas the German Army averaged 12 and in the French Army, 6. Kersnovskii, III, 502, states that there were only 5,500 reenlisted NCOs in the Russian Army in 1881, whereas legislation had planned for 32,000 by that date.

⁵¹ For a study of peasant revolts (Bolotnikov, Stenka Razin, Pugachev), see Paul Avrich, *Russian Rebels 1600-1800* (New York, 1972). In the Chigirin affair, the chief lieutenants of the revolutionaries in the villages were indeed discharged soldiers. See Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of the Tsar* (Boston, 1976), chap. 3.

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by other owners. In four of these incidents reservists or retired soldiers are identified among the instigators. Figures compiled by the Ministry of Justice show that of eighty-three instances of rural disturbances in the years 1896-1898, troops were called out seven times.⁵² The appearance of troops usually settled the matter quickly and without bloodshed, but the participants could not but be aware that peasant was confronting peasant, and versions of the incidents certainly made the rounds of villages and barracks.

Troops were also employed in factory disturbances. In 1895, the first year of major labor unrest of the era of industrial boom, they were called upon to deal with strikes in the textile centers of Yaroslavl, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, and Belostok, as well as in Ekaterinoslav and the two capitals. Revolutionary agitation was not yet present in the villages and barracks to work on the minds of the masses, but the Social Democrats were quick to focus the factory workers' attention on the role of the Army. A pamphlet put out in 1895 by the Moscow Social Democrats recounts the Yaroslavl strike in detail, noting that troops fired on the strikers, killing one and wounding others, including women and children. It also cites in full the tsar's telegram of congratulation to his "glorious soldiers" for exemplary devotion to duty. After the turn of the century incidents of this sort multiplied to such an extent that the government had to fear for the loyalty of its troops. These facts are not intended to prove that a spirit of mutiny was rife in the barracks; rather, they are examples of the kinds of experiences and perceptions that were in circulation and being stored up for future reference. The stage was being set for Bloody Sunday.⁵³



Life for a soldier in the Imperial Army in peacetime was or-

⁵² See *Krestianskoe dvizhenie v Rossii v 1890-1900 gg.*, ed. A. V. Shapkarin (Moscow, 1959); pp. 38, 43-44, 53, 54-56, 60, 72, 74, 84, 89, 92, 97, 100, 107. The figures of the Ministry of Justice for 1896-1898 are in *ibid.*, pp. 414-15. A survey of the materials in the collection reveals six instances in 1900 alone in which troops were employed to put down disturbances. *Ibid.*, pp. 496ff.

⁵³ See *Raboochee dvizhenie v Rossii v XIX veke*, ed. L. M. Ivanov, 4 vols. (Moscow, 1950-1963), iv, pt. 1, pp. 61, 65, 103, 127, 300, 317, 836, 837. Without identifying his source, V. D. Petrov refers to 50,000 troops employed in the suppression of disorders of all kinds in 1901, 107,000 in 1902, and 160,000 in 1903; for the previous decade the yearly average varied between 10,000 and 19,000. *Ocherki po istorii revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia*

dinarily one of unrelieved routine and boredom. Within six months the soldier had learned most of his basic skills, and training exercises thereafter were merely repetition to keep in shape. Otherwise his routine consisted of occasional guard duty, inspections, and reviews, infrequent tactical maneuvers, and endless work details. For the sake of economy, Russian soldiers did a good bit of their own tailoring, building and equipment repairs, and other upkeep chores, employing skills they had acquired in civilian life. There was also an approved system, which was occasionally abused, of leasing out soldiers as laborers to nearby industries on a contract basis; a third of the wages was supposedly consigned to regimental funds for various amenities the treasury could not afford. Skilled soldiers were hoarded by regimental officers and traded off for those with other skills in short supply.

Three uniforms, unfinished boot leather, a greatcoat for all seasons, a knapsack, and a rifle were all that was issued to a soldier. He slept on a straw mattress in a wooden bunk, covered only by his coat. Families were expected to supply such luxuries as extra underwear and soap; the meager salary (thirty-five kopecks per month) covered only cigarette money, while petty bribes to sergeants had to be financed by money from home. When blankets and bed sheets were introduced as regulation issue after 1905, it was regarded as a miracle of benevolence (Denikin refers to it as one of the "conquests" of the Revolution of 1905, which it quite literally was).⁵⁴

The daily fare was unchanging and uniform for the entire army: bread for breakfast, cabbage soup with meat (*shchi*) for the main meal, and a porridge of buckwheat groats or other cereal (*kasha*) for supper. This menu was so inflexible from one part of the em-

v russkoi armii (Moscow and Leningrad, 1964), p. 5. Undoubtedly, considerable redundancy exaggerates these figures but one can infer a considerable increase in the psychological impact on the soldiers after the turn of the century. Another Soviet source refers to archival data showing that 49 persons were sentenced by military courts for political activity in 1902, and 152 in 1903; all but a handful of them were soldiers rather than officers. No details on the nature of the charges are cited. *Bor'ba bol'shevikov za armiiu v trekh revoliutsiiakh* (Moscow, 1969), pp. 19-20.

⁵⁴ *Staraia armii*, II, 127. A number of details are taken from this excellent chapter. See also John Shelton Curtiss's "The Peasant and the Army," in Wayne S. Vucinich, ed., *The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Stanford, 1968), pp. 108-32.

pire to another that a soldier's ditty ran: "Shchi da kasha, pishcha [food] nasha." The daily ration per man of three pounds of bread and half a pound of meat was carefully doled out by the commissary and had to be accounted for. Medical officers were supposed to inspect the food regularly for calorie, vegetable, and fat content, and commanding officers from general on down were expected to make regular samplings of the food directly from the kettle, a duty that seems to have been widely practiced. If prepared according to peasant palate, the food was not likely to arouse complaints, as most soldiers ate better in the Army than back in their villages (even Volunteer Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky felt that one ate well at the soldiers' table).⁵⁵

The inventiveness and concern of commanders was expected to effect minor improvements in the soldiers' life, according to the standard phrase of the time, "without cost to the treasury." It might be a coat of paint for the barracks interior, a reading shelf, shower bath arrangements, or slight variations in the daily menu. General A. A. Ignat'ev recounts how as a company commander, on the good advice of the sergeant major from a rival company, he improved on the standard evening *kasha* by having a portion of meat saved out from the midday *shchi*, adding to it onions and other ingredients and searing them in fat to make a tasty sauce. He reaped the impeccable gratitude of his men, and the cost was covered by economizing on hay for the horses.⁵⁶

Discipline and punishment, though far from mild, was considerably more humane than in the prereform era. Corporal punishment was still countenanced, but only by the sentence of a military court and not on the authority of an officer alone. It seems to have been resorted to rarely, but it was a particularly repugnant spectacle. With the entire unit assembled, the commanding officer

⁵⁵ Op. cit., pp. 9-10.

⁵⁶ Op. cit., I, 182. Ignat'ev later noticed that the horses were unduly thin as a result of the legendary side trading in forage by NCOs. He therefore instituted a system of careful reckoning whereby each platoon leader signed up for the daily portion of feed on a chalkboard set up by a scale. He contracted for a boxcar of oats from Tula at a favorable price on credit and retired the debt by savings on other items from several separate accounts. Soon the horses were plump and respectable again. Such book juggling and subterfuges were a necessary part of good economy in the Old Army.

read out the sentence, and, under the supervision of a sergeant, two enlisted men flayed the bound and stretched-out victim across the back with birch rods. Although it seldom resulted in permanent injury (unlike the imaginative cruelties of the previous era), there is no question that the practice was deeply resented by the soldiers, who, according to Denikin, often committed more serious offenses to merit a prison sentence instead. Corporal punishment was abolished simultaneously in military and peasant courts in 1904, but, unwisely, it was restored shortly before the First World War, to be employed at the commanding officer's discretion and without court procedures.

Typical punishments for minor infractions included a stay in the guardhouse on bread and water and long hours of standing at attention with full pack and rifle (*stanovka pod ruzhem*), the pack often loaded with sand or heavy rocks. The most widespread forms of abuse were blows in the face with fists (*mordebit'e*) and free use of the terms *svoloch* (scum) and *merzavets* (scoundrel) and of the classic Russian mother-curse. Sergeants indulged in these on any and all occasions, but officers were officially discouraged from using them. In the Kiev Military District, for example, General Dragomirov required that every instance of an officer striking a soldier be reported up the chain of command and regarded as a major incident.⁵⁷

Thus discipline in the Russian Army, while still reflecting the inequities of a caste-ridden society, was not shockingly more cruel than practices in most contemporary armies, and it was probably less so than in the German and French armies (in the latter, face slapping was an approved practice). It is doubtful that harsh treatment by NCOs caused widespread resentment, as the peasant was accustomed to brutalizing treatment from his social peers in the village environment. However, officers were looked upon as noblemen in uniform (the term *barin*, or master, was in broad currency), and the reform era had successfully implanted the notion that such behavior on a gentleman's part was no longer sanctioned from above and had been abolished with serfdom. Officers who indulged in blows and abusive language were clearly singled out and despised by the soldiers.

The real flaw in the relations between soldiers and officers in

⁵⁷ See Denikin, *Staraia armia*, II, 142-43. Denikin claims to have witnessed corporal punishment only once in his long career—as the officer in charge!

the Imperial Army was not physical abuse but the manifold outward marks of social distance imposed both by regulations and by society at large. For example, the *ty* and *Vy* forms of address were the equivalent of "boy" and "Mister" in the American Old South. The first thing a recruit learned was a list of honorific titles for each grade of officer: "your Honor" (*blagorodie*) up to the rank of colonel; "your Excellency" for generals; and "your Radiance" or "Most High Radiance" for titled officers. Infractions in their use were severely punished. Colonels and generals were to be greeted not with a simple hand salute in passing, but by halting, standing at attention sideways, and holding the salute as the personage passed for a prescribed number of paces (*stanovka na front*). One answered one's superiors in prescribed phrases in a sharp, full voice: "Exactly so, your Honor" (*tochno tak, vashe blagorodie*); "Not at all, your Honor" (*nikak net*, etc.); "Happy to serve you, your Honor" (*radi staratsia*). A long list of proscriptions guided the soldier when off duty: no smoking in public places, no visiting of restaurants and theaters, no riding in the interior of trams (but hanging on was permitted), no occupying first- or second-class compartments on the railroads. The one omission in the regulations, public parks, was taken care of by large signs that read: "DOGS AND SOLDIERS FORBIDDEN TO ENTER."

It was the legacy of General Dragomirov that officers were encouraged to draw close to their men, to speak to them "soul to soul," to be their "older brother," and to gain their confidence. Official directives suggested that officers read books to their men in the evening, help them to write letters home, and enter into their personal problems. Such efforts more frequently created embarrassment than good will. It was difficult for the peasant soldier to believe in the sincerity of gestures that were manifestly artificial in the face of social realities. Denikin portrays a typical lieutenant, proficient in his duties but not in conversation other than official, who makes an honest effort to execute a directive to be informal. He tries out the technique on his orderly: "Tell me, Sasha, do they have wolves in your village?" Taken aback by the unaccustomed familiarity, the orderly replies according to regulations: "*Not at all, no, your Honor!*" The lieutenant wipes his brow, frowns, searches in vain for an appropriate follow-up, and exclaims: "Go to the devil then!"⁵⁸ Most officers, unable to cope

⁵⁸ Ibid., II, 151-52.

with the obstacles, reverted to the only pattern of relations available—that of command and subordination—and did not otherwise intrude into the private lives of their soldiers.



The army envisaged by the Miliutin reform legislation was based on a concept that conflicted too much with the mores of society at large to create the hoped-for sense of an enterprise shared by soldier and officer alike. The legacy of serfdom, driven out the front door, filtered back in through all the side doors and windows. The soldier probably did not reflect often on the indignities or hardships of military life; to him they were simply a part of the tribute a peasant was expected to pay to outside society, along with taxes, passports, and bribes to rural police officials. Discipline, harsh punishment, and relentless drill were perceived by the peasant soldiers not as necessary mechanisms for effective military performance, but as onerous forms of *barshchina* (corvée service) to be endured fatalistically until he could return to his native village. At best he might treat the seriousness of the gentlemen-officers at their professional tasks with good-natured indulgence, but not with real understanding. Two phenomena that had roots in the prereform era bear striking witness to the peasants' ineradicably negative view of the military life, namely, drunken orgies of new recruits, which often ended in the plundering of wine shops, and self-mutilation, usually the severing of the shooting finger of the right hand. The former offense seldom drew serious consequences and even acquired the status of a firm tradition, but the latter was punished severely by military courts as tantamount to desertion. Nevertheless, new recruits continued to practice it with incomprehensible frequency.⁵⁹ It was the peasants' primitive form of revenge against cultured society

⁵⁹ Ignat'ev (I, 86-87) was shocked to learn of the practice when, as a young officer, he was obliged to serve on a court-martial dealing with such a case, and he thought it exceptional. Denikin, who had longer service in the line and was more familiar with the ways of peasants, knew that it was not: "In the first critical weeks of service young soldiers often resorted to self-mutilation to escape service. Always naively and stupidly, always in the same fashion: using a knife or an axe, they cut off one or two fingers of their right hand. The result was inevitable—military prison or a disciplinary battalion and a stupidly wrecked life. Nevertheless, cases increased from year to year." *Staraia armii*, II, 164.

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for having robbed them of their modest aspirations in life. There was no means of inculcating in the peasant-soldier a sense of patriotism and meaning in his military calling similar to that of the officer class short of transforming the society at large.

Peasant classes generally do not feel an identification with the goals of the larger society or with such abstractions as the nation, the state, or the empire. These values are developed through protracted cultural breeding and education. In earlier centuries only the aristocracies and ascendant middle classes could afford the luxury of such concepts; in the nineteenth century democratization and industrialization diffused them to the masses, primarily via popular education, representative institutions and politics, and the mass-circulation press. But in countries with illiterate or semiliterate peasantries that continued to be treated as socially inferior by the larger society, the masses necessarily remained outside the domain of national culture.

The notion that in Russia veneration of the tsar was an effective equivalent of patriotism is a gross miscalculation. It is true that the peasant-soldier cultivated a mystical attitude toward the person of the tsar, which he expressed during reviews by wild exultation at the latter's personal appearance, but this was not carried over to the authority structure in the Army any more than to rural police officials or to the sanctity of *pomeshchik* (landowner) property. The existing hierarchy of authority and the social classes that shored it up were, in peasant eyes, fundamentally alien and illegitimate. The Tsar-Batiushka was revered precisely because it was felt that he sanctioned the peasants' way of life: it was the tsar who had freed them from the grip of *pomeshchik* dominion, and were he not somehow deceived or held hostage by his officials, he would most certainly give them land and release them from taxes and conscription. This was the mythopoeic, millenarian view of a preliterate culture under bondage, not the coherent system of loyalty, infused by education and propaganda, of a full-fledged citizenry of a modern state. True, countless thousands of Russian soldiers had perished or become lifelong cripples for "tsar and fatherland" and would do so again, but this was the meaning ascribed to their sacrifice by the cultured layer, not the inwardly felt attitude of the peasant-soldiers themselves. The peasants' attitude toward war was not unlike their attitude toward any natural catastrophe—something to be borne fatalistically.

The peasant-recruit knew that to resist the military obligation could only mean his ruin, and since he could not gainsay that the tsar somehow wanted him to serve (though he suspected the machinations of the *pomeshchiki*), the safest course was to submit to what was required of him and to pray to the saints that he would come back to his village with life and limb. In his cups he was likely to reach for the only explanation possible—God was punishing him for his sins.

The military reformers were not unaware of this problem and well realized that the counterpart to the introduction of the system of trained reserves had to be the development of a higher degree of conscious commitment to military duty. For this reason, Miliutin banked heavily on general educational reforms, which did not materialize. As a weak surrogate, provisions for courses in basic literacy for soldier-recruits were made a part of the conscription law of 1874, but apparently they fell victim to the economies of the following reign.⁶⁰ Miliutin's reasoning followed the liberal assumptions of Gneisenau and Scharnhorst, that the army and the nation are one and that every citizen must be inculcated with the idea of his obligation to serve. Such civic feelings could only be cultivated, the Prussian reformers realized, through a national system of education and civic breeding. In spite of the mighty blast of the French Revolution, the concept was premature: Prussia itself suffered a considerable setback in the period of restoration and again after 1848. But unification, rapid advances in education, and the introduction of quasi-representative institutions made it a powerful reality in the last few decades of the century. In France the idea of civic duty had to await the collapse of the Second Empire (and with it, the idea of a standing army) and the fitful evolution of a new republican military ethos. In England it was a part of the long process of democratization during the nineteenth century, reaching imperfect fruition only in the Haldane reforms after the turn of the century. In point of fact, few military theorists of the latter half of the nineteenth century explicitly acknowledged a connection between military moderniza-

⁶⁰ There seems to be no satisfactory discussion in the literature of this culturally significant feature of the reform of 1874, but Denikin's observations make it clear that in his time literacy classes were held only for prospective NCOs. From 1902 onward, he claims, it was done more systematically in the infantry but was still neglected in the artillery and cavalry. In 1905, 59% of new recruits were literate. *Staraiia armiia*, II, 165, 160.

tion and democratized institutional structures. What they wanted above all was a scientifically educated military elite (the idea of a general staff), a reasonably well-educated and dedicated officer corps, advanced weapons, and a rapidly mobilizable, highly motivated soldier reserve from the country at large. However, backward, preindustrial, hierarchically stratified societies cannot supply these prerequisites. The chief prerequisite, as the future was to demonstrate, was not fully democratized institutions but the sense and semblance of them in the popular mind. Thus the German Empire, with its formidable schoolmasters, quasi-parliamentary regime, and mass-circulation press, was able to build on the advances in popular education to produce a unique sense of national identity that was only incidentally wedded to the monarchy. France, for all its bitter class conflict and ingrained suspicion of the military caste, could keep alive in its school texts, parliamentary debates, and revanchist press the inseparability of the rights of man, the republic, and the defense of *la patrie*.⁶¹ Russia, with none of these accomplishments to its credit, had little to hope for. At the turn of the century the Russian Army could boast a number of the attributes of a modern army: universal conscription, a fairly rational system of reserves, the General Staff Academy and

⁶¹ The historical interpretation here is the author's own and will certainly not be shared by all. On the Prussian reforms and experience, see Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army, 1640-1945* (New York, 1964), chap. 2, and Franz Schnabel, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, 4 vols. (Freiburg, 1949-1959), I, 365-407 ("Scharnhorst und die Reform des Heeres"), II, 218-20, 309-41; for France, see David B. Ralston, *The Army of the Republic: The Place of the Military in the Political Evolution of France, 1871-1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), and Richard Chaler, *The French Theory of the Nation in Arms, 1866-1939* (New York, 1965), chaps. 1-3. The French case is complicated by the hiatus of the Dreyfus Affair and other conflicts, but the overall trend of republican politics was clearly toward the concept and system of a "nation in arms," unequivocally so by 1910. For striking documentation of the republican military ethos in the schools, press, and literature, which was unaffected throughout by the various crises over the enemies of the republic (monarchism, the church, the anti-Dreyfussard generals), see Raoul Girardet, *Le Nationalisme français 1871-1914* (Paris, 1966), pp. 37-80. The Prussian reformers' views on liberal institutions and popular education are usually overlooked. Boyen justified his policies as follows: "The old school wishes to consider military questions without the participation of the public; the new school holds the defense of the state is impossible without the material and moral co-operation of the entire nation." Cited in Theodore Ropp, *War in the Modern World* (Durham, N.C., 1959), p. 153.

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professionalized leadership, and, with the junker school reform, the promise of a democratized, educated officer corps. Beyond this institutional shell, however, the Army lacked the supportive institutions and attitudes of the society as a whole. It still served primarily as an instrument to preserve the outmoded autocratic system, and the social classes upon which it increasingly depended to service its various functions could not but look upon it as an alien growth. The moment of truth was soon to come.

CHAPTER II



THE LEGACY OF DEFEAT AND REVOLUTION

FOR RUSSIA'S SOCIETY and army alike, the consequences of flawed modernization were fully manifested in the tempestuous years 1904 and 1905. That the autocracy would take on the risk of a major war in such a remote arena at a time of sharply rising social tension in itself bespeaks a deficiency in its instinct for survival. The better heads in ruling circles, such as Witte and Kuropatkin, were well aware of the dangers, but they were overruled by the tsar's personal policy, which was inspired by the irresponsible Bezobrazov clique.¹ Military planning with regard to troop positioning, strategic roads and fortresses, mobilization plans, maneuvers, and general staff training had for decades been oriented toward the prospect of a conflict with the German monarchies on the western border. The implicit ideology of national tasks was Pan-Slavism, fed by exaggerated fears of Pan-Germanism.² The modernizing thrust of military thinking was predicated on the ability of the monarchy to mobilize the patriotic sentiment of all layers of Russian society, loosely based on the concept of a "nation in arms." For a multinational empire with an historic

¹ A. M. Bezobrazov was a retired guards officer who succeeded in dazzling the tsar with the prospect of secretly penetrating Korea under the guise of a timber concession and effectively occupying that country before Japan was aware of what was happening. It involved a policy of systematic deception, even within the circles of the Russian government, and could only result in provoking Japan to war.

² For two of many examples of Pan-Slavist sentiment among military figures, see Denikin, *Put'*, pp. 293-94, and Iu. N. Danilov, *Rossia v mirovoi voine 1914-15* g.g. (Berlin, 1924), p. 89. Theirs was a relatively mild, rational Pan-Slavism, inspired primarily by potential strategic problems that had to be resolved on a practical level. Others displayed a more deeply emotional, rabidly anti-German variety as, for example, Brusilov (op. cit., pp. 51-52).

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problem of miscomprehension between state and people, however, such a notion could be plausible only on the basis of a Slavic-European orientation, as the Russo-Turkish War had presaged and as the Great War would confirm. Educated opinion, particularly that of the radical intelligentsia, was overwhelmingly hostile to official Russia and cosmopolitan, even pacifist, in its outlook. For nearly a decade social forces had been gathering for a challenge to the political order. The military establishment was looked upon not as the legitimate upholder of Russia's external interests, but as an obstacle to internal social and political goals.

Until 1904 the Army had by and large been a reliable instrument for the suppression of disorders. Whatever may have been their inner thoughts, the soldiers mutely performed their unpleasant duties and showed few visible signs of disaffection. Revolutionaries occasionally tried, with little success, to reach the soldiers through agitational literature or volunteer and officer sympathizers. The most dangerous moment so far had been the massive general strike in southern cities in the summer of 1903, obliging the government to employ troops with great caution. The storm was weathered without major defection, but it should have been apparent that the Army could not forever remain immune to social and political currents outside so long as it was drawn from the same social layers that were in the throes of unrest.

The Army had been spared thus far primarily because of the extreme youth and physical isolation of the recruits (virtually all were under the age of twenty-five), which tended to insulate them against the grievances of their elders. The officer class tended to be apolitical and supportive of constituted authority insofar as the latter pursued comprehensible national goals and provided reasonable leadership, but experiences that belied that confidence, such as orders to shoot at unarmed civilians and manifest incompetence in the conduct of war, could easily make them receptive to the political tendencies in the country at large. With few exceptions, the officer corps was loyal up to 1904. The only fortuity that could have substantially altered this situation within a short space of time was the one that transpired—an unpopular, unsuccessful war in a remote region against a foe perceived to be inferior.

The interconnection between the Russo-Japanese War and the Revolution of 1905 is well enough known and does not need to be

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chronicled here. What bears examination is the rapid penetration of social disaffection and revolutionary ideas throughout the Army, an essentially new and ominous phenomenon. While it is true that the Army, or that part of it still subject to control, enabled the tsarist government to survive revolution this first time, it was a badly damaged instrument and required considerable corrective efforts to obliterate the memory of the unwholesome experiences through which it had gone.



With the declaration of war and the mobilization of the reserves in 1904, the insulation of the Army from civilian unrest and revolutionary propaganda was no longer possible. In place of an army of raw, naive youth and apolitical professional officers, there sprang up a new army of mobilized civilians of all ages, social types, and persuasions. Had this been a popular war whose aims were understood and supported in a relatively tranquil period of national life this transformation could have been a great asset to the cause of Russian arms, but in the given circumstances it meant the influx of hordes of anxious family men, worker-veterans of the strike movement, peasants who had been beaten down by the army they were entering, volunteers and reserve officers who had imbibed radicalism in the universities (some even from the revolutionary underground), and middle-class professionals and landed gentry who gravitated in the orbit of the Liberation Movement. These last were often willing to shelve their political goals for the duration of the war, but the mood of the rest was for the most part irreconcilable. In the course of the year the revolutionary parties redirected much of their propaganda and agitation toward the barracks, which hitherto had been considered impenetrable. Countless leaflets denounced the war, encouraged evasion by reservists, and exhorted those in uniform not to fire upon workers and demonstrators. Exaggerated versions of the hardships of the Manchurian campaign (strange food, epidemics, poisoned water) and tidings of every defeat and retreat became standard fare.³ Harsh countermeasures served only to irritate the

³ For a sampling of wartime leaflets, see *Listovki moskovskikh bol'shevikov v period pervoi russkoi revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1955). One from October 1904 exclaims: "Mothers and wives of reservists! 'Don't let them drag off your breadwinners to certain death! . . . Gather in large crowds and cry boldly, 'We don't want to go to war!'" (p. 30). Ten other leaflets, dating

soldiers and excite their curiosity, as it meant canceled leaves, searches of their belongings, forced denunciations, and multiplication of "political cases" handled by the military courts.⁴ Many local revolutionary organizations—Bolshevik, Menshevik, and Socialist Revolutionary—formed military sections that specialized in agitation and recruitment of military sympathizers.⁵ By the end of 1904 local revolutionary groups often had dozens of cells in various military units and conducted regular propaganda sessions of the sort that had hitherto been organized successfully among the workers. Until Bloody Sunday the effect of this activity on the soldiers was minimal, though it could and sometimes did catalyze antipathy to the order of things that had sent them off to war. In the course of 1905, however, the situation changed materially, and by October the Army was as open to radicalization as any other sector of society.

The social impact of the early phases of mobilization was not great, as first call was given to the Siberian and Far Eastern military districts. The peasant settlers and Trans-Baikal Cossacks there were still largely untouched by the unrest of European Russia; many were veterans of the expeditionary force to China during the Boxer Rebellion and could be more easily persuaded that they were defending their homeland against a tangible foe. Only two army corps from European Russia were mobilized at the outset, one each from the Kiev and Moscow military districts, but because of the haste of these operations, most of those sent out in the first echelons were of the thirty-nine to forty-three age group.⁶ These *borodachi* (heads of large households customarily wore beards) were extremely bitter about being wrenched from their fragile economies, and they quickly developed an

up to October 1905, are included in this collection. Other Soviet collections and monographs also supply examples, particularly the documentary series *RDM*.

⁴ Information in Soviet sources is scarce for the period prior to Bloody Sunday, but see V. D. Petrov, pp. 5, 57ff., and *RDAP*, pp. 29-35, 105-12, and passim. The latter is an excellent collection of monographs on different military districts, which are based exclusively on archival materials.

⁵ For brief references to Bolshevik and S.R. military organizations, see *Bor'ba bol'shevikov za armiiu v trekh revoliutsiakh*, pp. 21, 24; for the Mensheviks, see P. A. Garvi, *Vospominaniia sotsial-demokrata* (New York, 1945), pp. 441-43.

⁶ See Kersnovskii, III, 538.

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antagonistic relationship with the younger regulars ("you are the soldiers; we have served our turn already and have many mouths to feed"). Moreover, at the front they panicked, fled under fire, and clamored for noncombatant jobs in the rear (commanders often complied to salvage the morale of the regulars).⁷ And this was but the beginning of what was to turn into massive demoralization in the Far Eastern Army that kept the turmoil going for a year after the defeat of the revolutionary parties.

Because of the delicate mobilization mechanism for the western border areas and the absence of such a plan for the Far East, the buildup of the Far Eastern Army was carried out in a series of improvised partial mobilizations, nine in all, affecting first one and then another region with arbitrary force. The first areas to be mobilized were those districts that were remote from the frontier, where reservists were in the least state of readiness with regard to training and equipment. The older ones had never handled the Mosin rifle, nor had they been exercised in modern infantry tactics; in some cases they received less than ten days of training before being shipped off to the front. As luck would have it, among the first to be mobilized were peasants from the very areas where unrest had been rife, namely, Poltava and the middle Volga. Many could not understand why all the reservists in their districts should be called up, while those living in adjacent areas remained unaffected and recruits completing their term of regular service were even being discharged.

The five-week's journey by train across Siberia further contributed to demoralization. Officers, regulars, and reservists traveled in separate compartments, and the latter had little to do but to mull over their grievances and blow off steam during the prolonged delays. Troops trains were especially vulnerable to the increasing revolutionary propaganda, with packets of leaflets handed through windows or picked up from railroad workers by radical volunteers.⁸

The internal state of the country and the desire to retain trained units intact for police actions (minus unhappy reservists) meant that the method of mobilizing individual corps in select areas continued with all its inconveniences and inequities up to the

⁷ See Kuropatkin, *Zapiski*, pp. 256-58 and passim. His very detailed and helpful account of the mobilization process and of the problem of morale among the called-up reservists is drawn upon below.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 274-75.

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decisive battle of Mukden (February 12-26, 1905, O.S.). Only at Kuropatkin's urgent request (he was commander in chief in the field) was there a shift to making up replacement units from new recruits and younger reservists without regard to their districts or former units; in addition, a call for volunteers from the ranks of unmobilized units was answered by 40,000 soldiers. These men were far more promising fighting material, but they arrived in Manchuria in significant numbers only in May and never saw battle. Ironically, in the summer of 1905 a first-class, well-equipped force nearly a million strong faced an exhausted Japanese Army of far inferior strength, but the Tsushima disaster intervened to hasten the Portsmouth Peace.⁹

In the first half of 1904 the reluctance of reservists to answer the call to the colors expressed itself more in violent, drunken orgies and wine shop riots than in outright evasion. A Soviet investigation of the Moscow district based on archival data puts the initial rate of nonappearance at 2 percent; but by the seventh mobilization in early 1905 it had risen to between 6 and 8 percent, a very definite index of unrest.¹⁰ Disorders of various kinds and magnitude marked the progress of mobilized reservists from collection points all the way to Manchuria. Many deserted shortly after reporting for duty, others detained enroute, and riots and other incidents occurred at mobilization centers and railroad stations along the way. A governor-general's report from Voronezh in early 1905 complained of seven hundred freshly mobilized reservists absent without leave; a group of fifty new arrivals, all from *volosts* (subdistricts) in the Briansk district, disappeared en masse. At distribution points the soldiers rioted over the lack of straw mattresses, and at railroad stations they rebelled at being denied use of the buffet or permission to seek diversion in town. The quest for alcohol was a frequent occasion for such incidents; at other times it was commonplace soldier complaints or the clearly provocative behavior of officers and NCOs. But it is doubtful whether any of these disorders would have taken on such collective and sustained forms except for the mood of protest in the country at large. Revolutionary leaflets and agitators occasionally cropped up during such incidents, but this was more likely to mean that the revolutionaries were attempting to capitalize on a spontaneous outbreak than that they had inspired it.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 241-42.

¹⁰ RDAP, p. 32.

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In any event, authorities were clearly baffled and upset by the phenomenon and deluged their superiors with alarming reports.¹¹



Bloody Sunday was the major radicalizing experience for urban Russia in 1905, but it had far less impact on the Army and the countryside. The guards and other military units that carried out the repressive actions performed their task with little ambivalence because there were no disgruntled reservists in their ranks. Also, the working-class population of St. Petersburg was spared mobilization until July 1905, which cushioned the effect of metropolitan events on the Army. While Russia's cities were wracked by strikes, meetings, demonstrations, and the practice of "free speech," unrest in the barracks was merely a continuation, on a somewhat larger scale, of the phenomena of 1904. Agitation through leaflets, contacts between revolutionary organizations and small groups of soldiers, tight security measures, and prophylactic arrests grew apace and transmitted echo tremors from the outside world, but not until October did they result in major challenges to military authority.

Soldiers were used extensively to patrol streets and to guard factories and institutions, becoming spectators of the agitated crowds and harried actions of the police; but as far as possible, with the St. Petersburg fiasco in mind, the authorities avoided bringing soldiers and their weapons into play. Large congregations of demonstrators and strikers had to be tolerated so long as they were peaceful, but the authorities could not tolerate violent assaults on police or property. By summer, in response to a new wave of strikes, troops were involved in shooting incidents that resulted in considerable casualties. These confrontations occurred primarily on the periphery of European Russia (the Vladikavkaz railroad line, the Polish and Baltic provinces), but also in the core of Russia, most notably in Ivanovo-Vozne-

¹¹ Specific instances are cited in each of the above studies; see *ibid.*, pp. 32-34, 109-11, 187-88, 257-58. The chief of the Siberian Military District complained on Oct. 12, 1904, that he was obliged to cordon off each arriving train at stations along the way to prevent disorders, which tied down 75 companies and was a source of much bickering between the field command and the War Ministry. See *ibid.*, p. 302, and Kuropatkin, *Zapiski*, p. 273.

sensk.¹² A massive general strike in the textile area around Ivanovo, which lasted more than three weeks, was very disciplined at first with the help of a workers' militia and a shadow authority in the form of a strike committee, but toward the last it was marked by extensive arson and looting. An attack by undisciplined Cossacks on crowds gathered at their customary meeting place on the River Talka saw large numbers trampled and beaten. Regular troops on stand-by (several companies each of the Tenth Grenadier, the Ninth Siberian Grenadier, and the Third Sumskii Dragoon regiments) were not directly engaged but witnessed the wild scenes that followed.¹³

The October general strike and the October Manifesto finally broke down the barriers that had kept the soldiers relatively unpoliticized. They were in a different frame of mind after the signing of the Portsmouth Peace and above all wanted to get home. Soldiers' uniforms were now visible in the crowds that listened attentively to political orators, meetings with guests invited to explain political events took place in the barracks or nearby, and officers could do little to prevent it. Commanding officers were badgered with requests to explain the implications of the October Manifesto for soldiers: revolutionary agitators had persuaded them that they were now "free citizens" and entitled to the rights of free speech, attendance at public meetings, free political association, etc., and they wished this to be confirmed officially. Soldiers collectively discussed their needs, sometimes drawing up long lists of "demands," which included such items as bedsheets, a change of underwear, better shoe leather, polite treatment, immediate discharge of reservists, a constituent assembly, and amnesty for political offenders; moreover, they claimed the right to ride in streetcars, to leave the barracks when off duty, and to attend public meetings. The heterogeneity of the demands and the incongruous admixture of everyday soldier grievances with slogans circulating outside the barracks suggests that educated intellectuals in or out of uniform had offered their assistance. Nevertheless, the demands indicate the emergence among the soldiers of a very definite "civic consciousness," a feeling of personal worth and dignity that sought recognition from their officers and society at large. Thus the removal of various dis-

¹² For documentation, see *RDM*, Apr.-Sept. 1905, Pt. II, 109-11 (Vladikavkaz Railroad), 257 (Odessa), and 378-85 (Latvia).

¹³ See *ibid.*, Pt. I, 438-45, 448-49.

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criminations against soldiers, such as prohibitions against smoking in public, strolling in public parks, and attending public meetings, figures prominently, as did polite treatment and reasonable punishments. One also encounters a number of points that were to be incorporated in Order No. One in 1917, such as the substitution of *Vy* for *ty*, and of "Mister" (*Gospodin*) for "your Honor," in addressing soldiers and officers, respectively.¹⁴ The frequent demand for an official explanation of the meaning of the October Manifesto for soldiers and peasants, that is, what sort of liberties they could expect, is a striking index of the newly emerging political consciousness and bears considerable resemblance to peasant-soldier reactions in the February Revolution of 1917.¹⁵ In the tense atmosphere of the times it was risky for commanding officers to reject the demands out of hand or to state categorically that the October Manifesto did not change existing military regulations; most of them responded by putting their men off with vague explanations and unrealizable promises for the indefinite future.¹⁶



Except in Siberia, the Far East, and port cities, soldiers did not become a constituent part of the urban upheavals in the critical months of November and December; indeed, revolutionaries seemed not to be alert to the possibility of bringing them over with weapons intact. There were no counterparts to the sensa-

¹⁴ Of the numerous examples cited in *RDAP*, see pp. 51, 59, 213 (use of *Vy* and *Gospodin*), 50, 213, 217, 229 (polite treatment), 40, 50, 51, 204, 213, 217 (public parks, streetcars, and civilian clothes off duty), 40, 44, 49, 50, 51, 202, 204, 227 (boots, *kasha*, bed linen), 40, 50, 204, 217 (release from police duties), 48, 137, 202, 204, 213 (release of arrested comrades), 48, 51, 213 (dismissal of reservists), 49, 51, 204, 213, 217 (election of officers, revocation of disciplinary rights), 40, 45, 50 (October Manifesto), and 51, 204, 217, 227 (constituent assembly, general amnesty, freedom, and political rights).

¹⁵ Cf. Chapter VI below.

¹⁶ One can assume that most instances of this kind did not result in punitive measures unless compounded by more serious offenses. An official source, presumably comprehensive, lists 38 major violations of military order in 1905: 20 are characterized as "illegal presentations of demands," usually coupled with "disobedience to orders" or "unlawful assembly," 10 more are well-known instances of mutiny and armed violence, and the rest are petty forms of indiscipline. See "Chistka komsostava v tsarskoi armii v 1906 g.," *KA*, L-LII (1932), 215-23. All but a few of these incidents occurred in major cities during the general strikes of November and December.

tional naval mutinies, such as the celebrated Potemkin affair and the later ones in Libau, Sveaborg, Kronshtadt, and Sevastopol. The greatest opportunity seems to have been in Moscow, where a number of units (grenadiers, sappers, and artillery) had been saturated with propaganda during the summer months.¹⁷ During the general strike fifty or so representatives of various regiments were called together and discussed the possibility of insurrection. Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, and Socialist Revolutionaries each had their respective contacts and positions of strength. But P. A. Garvi, who at the time headed the Menshevik military organization and offers an extensive narrative of the uprising, has little to say about the soldiers at a time when workers' fighting detachments were being organized at a furious pace and the shaping mood was for a decisive engagement.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the Moscow Soviet, which was organized only on November 22, was the first in European Russia to spin off a parallel Soldiers' Soviet. Around 130 delegates from a dozen or so regiments attended a founding session, along with representatives of political parties and the Workers' Soviet. The mood is described as having been strongly in favor of an uprising.¹⁹

On November 26 a sappers battalion refused to obey an order to leave its barracks until its commander responded to a series of demands, including the freeing of suspected political offenders, the release of reservists, the provision of bed linen, tea ration, and three rubles a month pay, and limitations on the disciplinary powers of the company commander. A minority was prepared to seize the arms storage chamber in the event of a refusal, but instead the sappers awaited an official reply—which never came. The Second Grenadier Rostov Regiment was ordered out the following day to disarm the sappers, but it refused to move when told the object. On December 2, in response to the arrest of several of their number, the Rostov Regiment itself mutinied. Soldiers of the seventh company seized rifles and ammunition, soon followed by others. Taking two officers hostage, they took full command

¹⁷ See *RDM*, Apr.-Sept. 1905, Pt. 1, 395-400 (a series of military and Okhrana reports).

¹⁸ See *op. cit.*, pp. 605ff.

¹⁹ See *RDAP*, p. 48. Caution is advised in this instance, since no archival source is cited and no confirming references have come to the author's attention; however, the details presented seem to be quite concrete. Probably it was indeed founded and enjoyed a brief existence.

of their barracks and posted guards and machine guns at appropriate points. Finally, they elected the first recorded soldiers' committee in Russian history on the basis of one deputy per company. A long list of demands was worked out, and other regiments were invited to accede to them.²⁰

Here was a significant armed force, and it is tempting to speculate about what might have been the result had it joined the armed insurrection proclaimed by the Workers' Soviet three days later. But such was not to be: the soldiers began to lose heart almost as soon as the revolt began; the revolutionary parties and the Workers' Soviet, taken completely by surprise, temporized until it was too late; and other regiments did not respond. The Soldiers' Soviet, if it was still functioning, took no part. The outcome merely reflects the fundamental character of the 1905 Revolution: the flow of events was not subject to organized direction, but rather, it reflected the activization of successive groups, each imitating and stimulating the other, but each essentially looking for the realization of its particular aspirations independently. Insurrection for the purpose of seizing power and establishing a new order was still the vaguely formulated article of faith of a few of the revolutionary ideologues and did not yet sway the thinking of the masses, least of all the peasant-soldiers. What the latter expected from their bold action was for the authorities to take fright and give in on their most important demands. The peasant-soldiers felt no deep sympathy for the urban-based revolts and political slogans, and on their lists of demands were doubtless the gratuitous suggestions of radical volunteers and propagandized technical specialists.

Uneasiness and distrust of the leadership manifested itself very early in the Rostov revolt—in the subdued tone of the appeals, in the strongly voiced objection to carrying arms to meetings, and in the abrupt decision to strike out the general political items in the list of demands handed over to the commanding officer. When the latter simulated agreement to a number of points, the mood rapidly swung toward ending the affair. On the fourth of December the third and fourth battalions announced their intention to put themselves under their officers again, regardless of the decisions of the regimental committee leadership, and by the next

²⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 48-67. The account is rich in detail and is based on military and state archives.

day the latter was left high and dry. No action was undertaken on behalf of the fifty or so persons arrested. Nine were condemned to life imprisonment at hard labor, five to lesser terms, and a dozen or so suffered brief detention and assignment to disciplinary battalions. In the meantime the city commandant, fearful for the reliability of the other units, ordered all weapons securely locked up and called upon St. Petersburg for reinforcements. When the Semenovskii Guards Regiment arrived on the fifteenth via the once again functioning railroads, the bloody repression of the workers' uprising began in earnest. Moscow artillery units, previously susceptible to propaganda, assisted in the operation, virtually leveling the working-class section of Presnia.²¹

Although there were a few other instances of open revolt by military units, notably a sappers regiment in Kiev and fortress soldiers around Kronshtadt and Sveaborg, these illustrate even more dramatically that garrison unrest followed a momentum different from that of the urban revolts, and that at this point a joining of forces was beyond the realm of current possibilities. Tragically, soldiers continued to be employed extensively to mop up centers of lingering revolutionary resistance. Of what their thoughts and emotions were, there is little reflection in the sources, but it is clear that once the revolutionary movement was on the wane, few wished to jeopardize their timely return to their villages by openly disobeying orders. All this, however, could not efface the images and psychological jolts that the peasant-soldiers had absorbed, and these became a part of their collective experience, to be passed on to 1917. Many of the same men were back in the Army twelve years later, as were many peasants who had faced the unpleasantness of punitive expeditions. One must assume that peasant gray matter did not cease to function in or out of uniform.



In contrast to European Russia, Siberia and the Far East were the arena of a soldiers' revolt of considerable magnitude, which in several areas merged with local revolutionary powers and endured six weeks or longer, giving more than a foretaste of the

²¹ See Garvi, pp. 662-75, and J.L.H. Keep, *The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia* (London, 1963), pp. 242-57. For a grisly chronicle of the repressive actions of December that includes details on Moscow, see "Ezhenedel'naia zapiska po departamentom politicii," *KA*, XI-XII (1925), 163-80.

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Revolution of 1917. In addition to the sense of having been sent thousands of miles from their homeland on a fruitless and costly venture, the frame of mind of the troops in the field was conditioned by the fact that, three months after the signing of the Portsmouth Peace, very few of their million-odd number had been repatriated. The logistics of the operation were extremely difficult, owing to the worn-out condition of the railroad (acute scarcity of heated cars, heavy backlog of engine and track repairs) and the lack of food supplies along the route. The general railroad strike in October, which affected the Trans-Siberian line as well, had led to further delays. The mood of the reservists was sour in the extreme, and a flood of returned prisoners of war from Japan—many of whom had been subjected to socialist propaganda during their capture—added another element of turbulence.²² The greatly overcrowded transit points—Vladivostok, Harbin, Chita—were teeming with soldiers and officers who clamored to get home and who, having little else to do, gave themselves over to carousing and violence. Intermingled was a strange blend of puzzlement and political euphoria over the news of the October Manifesto, whose import was difficult to grasp, given the paucity of reliable information from European Russia.

By mid-November a highly combustible situation had developed: soldiers ceased to salute, behaved impertinently toward officers, roughed up railway officials, commandeered trains, and, when inebriated, thoroughly berated constituted authority. Military communications began to express alarm that the mass of reservists crowding the railway centers could no longer be contained, and that if an official interpretation of the October Manifesto were not forthcoming, the soldiers would give credence to the revolutionary versions fed them by railroad workers and political exiles.²³ A measure intended to relieve the pressure was the decision by Commander in Chief N. P. Linevich (he had replaced Kuropatkin, who was demoted to commander of the First Army) to alter the transport westward of complete regiments in a fixed order to the accommodation of reservists only, and on a first-come-first-serve basis. The result, as Kuropatkin hastened to inform him, was to spread disaffection to the categories that were dis-

²² See "Iz dnevnika Kuropatkina," *KA*, vii, 57.

²³ See *ibid.*, p. 56. Rich materials on the developing situation from Kuropatkin's personal archive appear in "Dvizhenie v voiskakh na Dal'nom Vostoke," *KA*, xi-xii (1925), 289-386.

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placed and to entrench the conviction that the most expeditious way to get home was to riot. Just when local commandant General Nadarov believed he had cleared unruly reservists out of Harbin, returning prisoners of war, sailors, and reservists rioted out of control in Vladivostok, and twenty train loads of them headed for Harbin.²⁴ On top of all this, a new general railroad strike was declared on November 25. In Siberia it escalated into the complete takeover by the railway unions of the railway administration and postal-telegraphic communications, and various revolutionary committees and soviets even assumed the functions of civil authority. General Nadarov tried to turn the anger of the reservists on the railroad workers and revolutionaries, but the latter neutralized this by expediting troop trains and interdicting regular passenger and goods trains carrying officers and their effects (many officers' families had resettled in Harbin during the war). Occasionally officers and regiments that had been held up took charge of trains by force, and railway personnel were not always unhappy to deal with organized units rather than with mobs of reservists.²⁵

Thus, in the month of December and far into the following year the vast Far Eastern Army flowed westward in an uninterrupted stream, taking part in local struggles for power, now on one side, now on the other, in a kaleidoscope of shifting constellations. Governors, local garrison commandants, and civil administrators were not usually removed but merely pruned of power, while their functions were curtailed or usurped. The technical side of railway administration and the censorship of postal and telegraphic communications were taken over by the white-collar Union of Railway Personnel, with the blue-collar railwaymen exercising a suspicious veto. Social Democrats, usually without distinction as to Bolshevik or Menshevik, were the strongest single political party and dominated various workers' soviets and committees, which kept public order through armed workers' militias and garrison units. The soviets or committees did not usually take over civil administration, but instead exerted pressure on expanded city dumas and civil authorities, into which they might or might not be co-opted. The pattern varied, but in almost every case local garrisons formed adjunct elective organizations and provided back-up military support. The garrisons were usually

²⁴ Kuropatkin to Linevich, Nov. 21, 1905, *ibid.*, p. 314.

²⁵ See Ignat'ev, I, 351ff., and Denikin, *Pur'*, pp. 221ff.

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composed of reserve replacement units for the Siberian and Trans-Baikal Cossack regiments at the front, as well as railway battalions, transport and technical units, and local security forces. In Irkutsk and Krasnoiarsk they numbered about 15,000, in Chita, about 5,000. Except for the Cossacks, they consisted almost exclusively of mobilized reservists from European Russia, since native Siberians had all long since departed for the front.

The heavy concentration of railway workers and political exiles meant that the garrisons became far more politicized following the October general strike than their counterparts in European Russia. Political meetings of soldiers and propaganda sessions were carried on with impunity. By the time of the second railroad strike in late November most of them had formed embryo organizations. In Irkutsk a "Soldiers and Cossacks Strike Committee" was formed on November 20, and on the twenty-ninth it declared a "military strike" in favor of a list of demands similar to those encountered in European Russia. The most important item was the immediate release of reservists, but virtually all the characteristic political items were included: abolition of the death penalty, end to internal police duties, abolition of field courts, freedom of demonstrations and strikes, and establishment of a constituent assembly. Under the auspices of the strike committee, 100,000 demonstrators, with Cossacks units at the head, marched through the streets of the city. Attempts to suppress the movement with echelons of reservists passing through were unsuccessful, but on December 2 the regular Irkutsk and Eniseisk Siberian rifle regiments returned from the front and put an end to the strike. Unlike the unruly reservists, they had their equipment intact and were under the command of their regular officers. They were the least demoralized units of the Far Eastern Army, hardened in battle experience, and had nothing but contempt for the non-Siberian replacements and railway workers who had delayed their return by giving preference to reservists.

In Krasnoiarsk the soldiers' revolt was spearheaded by the railway battalions (there was none in Irkutsk) that had been sent to suppress and supplant the railway workers but that had joined them instead. On December 6 they formed with the latter a "United Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies," which was dominated by Social Democrats, who exercised *de facto* power in Krasnoiarsk for almost a month, until the arrival of the Krasnoiarsk Siberian Rifle Regiment from Manchuria. Like their successors in 1917,

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they exercised a number of functions that demonstrated real power, such as patrolling the streets, freeing political prisoners, disarming the local police, and occupying government buildings, but they preferred to hand over formal authority to a new, democratically elected city duma. After the return of the Krasnoiar'sk regiment, they barricaded themselves in the railway repair shops, their support having dwindled to the railway battalions and the workers. At the persuasion of their former leader, Praporshchik Kuzmin, a small but heavily armed remnant of 183 soldiers and 296 workers surrendered on January 3, 1906, to the besieging force. Their punishment was mild considering the magnitude of the offense: 9 of them were given prison sentences of four to eight years, and 116 others were given shorter sentences in disciplinary battalions.²⁶

In Chita the revolt was remarkable for the organization of a "Soviet of Soldiers' and Cossacks' Deputies," which formally subordinated itself to a Social Democratic directorate made up of the experienced revolutionaries V. K. Kurnatovskii, A. A. Kostiusenko-Valiuzhovich, and I. V. Babushkin (all of them Bolsheviks). The same group controlled the leadership of a "Joint Committee of Railway Workers and Service Personnel" (that is, both blue- and white-collar workers), which exercised complete administrative control not only over Chita but also over a large area of Trans-Baikalia. Both soldiers and workers were heavily armed, and they strictly controlled the rail traffic through their region. The military governor-general, I. V. Kholshchevnikov, was not removed from his command, mainly because he willingly put his seal of approval on every measure demanded by the joint committee. After the liquidation of the affair, General Kholshchevnikov was tried and convicted by a court-martial for dereliction of duty.²⁷ The Chita Republic was well enough armed so that no military units passing through dared to challenge it (although some of the Siberian regiments might have liked to), and it held power until January 23, 1906, when it was flanked on both sides by the respective expeditionary forces of Generals Rennenkampf and Meller-Zakomelskii. The defenders surrendered without resistance, but suffered a terrible vengeance: Babushkin was sum-

²⁶ *RDAP*, p. 339. Other details are from the archival materials cited in *ibid.*, pp. 296-373.

²⁷ See the indictment of Kholshchevnikov published in *KA*, XI-XII, 329-75, which recounts many details of the Chita Republic.

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marily executed, and military courts issued death sentences to dozens of others, including twenty-six soldiers. A number of sentences were later reduced to prison terms, but the number of insurgents shot without trial probably made up for it.²⁸

Harbin and the line through Manchuria to Vladivostok were under the control of a strike committee dominated by the Union of Railway Personnel and its railway worker adjunct. It soon assumed full civil authority in the entire region and organized the dispatching and supplying of troop echelons with such efficiency that it had the grateful if grudging, support of General Linevich, who ordered the civilian police and military authorities to cooperate with the committee. The parallel workers' committee operated in a hostile and obstructionist manner, and, according to the titular "president" of this "Far Eastern Republic," Ferdinand Ossendowski, it was dominated not by Social Democrats but by Black Hundred elements inspired and financed by the Okhrana and the Union of the Russian People.²⁹ An elected garrison committee apparently existed, but it played no visible political role. The Harbin committee was loyal to Commander in Chief Linevich, and when its work was threatened by internal dissension of its more radical elements, it reduced itself to a five-man dictatorship. Almost all of the leaders of this unique movement were talented engineers and high officials of the railway administration, and most were of Polish extraction.

In mid-January, after the bulk of the Far Eastern Army had been sent on its way, General Linevich was abruptly removed and replaced by General N. I. Ivanov, who was rabidly hostile to the committee. The counteroffensive began in Vladivostok, where the local revolutionary committee acknowledged the authority of Harbin. The port commandant, General Kazbek, did not interfere with the administrative work of the committee and authorized public meetings for both civilians and the military "to discuss needs," by virtue of which a committee of soldiers and officers came into being. General Kazbek was removed by Linevich, however, and his successor forbade further participation by military personnel in public meetings and put on trial those officers who had cooperated with the committee. The city replied with a street dem-

²⁸ *RDAP*, pp. 352-53.

²⁹ *From President to Prison* (New York, 1925), p. 138. My account does not depend primarily on Ossendowski, as he is a somewhat less than reliable witness (see n. 30 below).

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onstration of virtually the entire civilian population, but it was treacherously ambushed without warning by machine guns. When news of the slaughter reached the various forts and naval vessels in the harbor, soldiers and sailors mutinied and occupied the town. It was a standoff between loyal and rebel forces until a punitive force of Cossacks under General Mishchenko arrived on February 7, 1906.³⁰



It is important to note that a considerable number of officers, even some in higher posts, embraced the new political ethos. There were few examples of this in European Russia, but in the peculiar atmosphere of Siberia and Manchuria it blossomed luxuriantly. On November 23 a large assemblage of officers in Chita formed a "Union of Officers and Military Specialists," which expressed its fraternity with the Soldiers' and Cossacks' Soviet.³¹ At the trial of General Kholshchevnikov one of the participants, a Lieutenant Danilevskii, explained that his intent had been "to keep the soldiers from falling under the influence of outsiders." But such a pretext could hardly account for the greetings sent by the union to the St. Petersburg Strike Committee and the mutinous cruiser *Ochakov*, or for its endorsement of "defense of the constituent assembly by force of arms."³² The orientation of these officers was, at the very minimum, radically democratic and constitutionalist. Moreover, they endorsed a resolution of the Soldiers' and Cossacks' Soviet that favored elected sergeants-at-arms and commissary officers, the use of *Vy* and "Mister" for soldiers and officers, respectively, the transfer of disciplinary functions from officers to elective courts, permission to leave the barracks in civilian clothes when off duty, and even the right to strike for better conditions!³³ That officer radicalism was not confined to volunteer reservists is confirmed by the accusation that a Major-General Danshevich,

³⁰ See the excellent documentation (military reports and a persuasive eyewitness account) in *RDM*, Jan.-Apr. 1906, Pt. 1, 900-914. Ossendowski's purported eyewitness version in *From President to Prison*, pp. 175-76, in which he claims that Kazbek ordered the bombardment of the town by naval vessels, which ended in a conflagration and general slaughter, has been proven to be fanciful; Gen. Kazbek had in fact already been removed. His account of the machine-gunning of the demonstrators, however, is confirmed by other sources, including official reports.

³¹ *RDAP*, pp. 347-48.

³² *KA*, XI-XII, 344-45.

³³ Text in *ibid.*, pp. 340-42.

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two colonels, and a long list of officers signed a statement published in the *Zabailkalskie Oblastnye Vedomosti* (December 11) proclaiming that the Army adhered to the Liberation Movement, rejected all internal police duties, and would serve the tsar only so long as he kept the promises of the October Manifesto.³⁴ Moreover, they declared that if the people through a democratically elected constituent assembly should choose the form of a democratic republic, they would defend it just as loyally as a constitutional monarchy.

More broadly symptomatic of the prevailing mood among officers was the reaction of an officer assembly in Harbin to General Nadarov's harangue to shoot down railroad workers and their families if they did not resume troop traffic: it passed a resolution declaring the railway workers to be "our brothers in the cause of freedom" and opened up the floor to political speeches.³⁵ On November 20, 1905, one Lieutenant Colonel Levandovskii reported to the general quartermaster of the field army that the chaos of the rear areas should be blamed not on the soldiers but on the officers, or rather, on the unnatural relations between officers and soldiers laid down in existing regulations, which cast the officer in the role of *barin*. He refuted the position taken by most senior officers—that the Army must remain "outside politics" and that the October Manifesto "does not affect the internal life of the army"—and insisted on the equality of officers and soldiers "as citizens." He proposed a variety of democratic reforms, the most startling of which was the institution of elective soldier-officer committees to consider all complaints against officers.³⁶ If nothing else, these incidents indicate the depth of the psychological jolt compounded by defeat, bewildering political developments, and a situation of incipient anarchy.

Doubtless, higher officers who flirted with such egalitarian ideas were few. Levandovskii estimated that only small minorities at the opposite extremes were either "carried away" by the revolution or wished to suppress it with machine guns, but that between the extremes the great majority "waver back and forth, fearing to overstep the deeply ingrained prejudices of tradition and the regulations to which [they] cling with blind obstinacy." The humiliation of defeat had certainly offended their sense of professionalism, and many of those who had been trained in the professional military

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 310 (text of the report, pp. 308-14).

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schools and the General Staff Academy began to search for reasons. Those higher officers who possessed inside knowledge or who dared to read newspapers were well aware of the intrigues of Bezobrazov and Admiral Alekseev and held a less than respectful view of their monarch and his mental capacities. Though averse to "party politics," to which they consigned even zemstvo liberalism, many held to an image of the state firmly grounded in law, which excluded secret court intrigue and obscurantist hostility to every progressive thought. Thus, like Kuropatkin, Denikin, and others, they welcomed the October Manifesto as a necessary step forward in state life, but regretted that it had been wrested from below by the mob and ambitious politicians rather than freely bestowed from above.³⁷

Among the junior officers, particularly of the reserves, there were a good many open partisans of revolution, both with a specific party orientation and without. Praporshchik A. Kuzmin, chairman of the Krasnoiarsk Soldiers' Soviet, was typical of the mobilized intellectuals, as were the many others who are casually mentioned in the sources.³⁸ Kuropatkin mentions a staff captain who agitated among the field troops on behalf of the Harbin committee, presumably the Workers' Committee, and urged the arrest of reactionary officers.³⁹ Unfortunately, there are not enough data of this kind in the available sources to allow an adequate profile and analysis, but the officer types that were to become so familiar in 1917 were at least discernibly present.



The turmoil in the Army, as in the countryside, continued into 1906 and even 1907, long after order was restored in Siberia and

³⁷ Kuropatkin confided his far-reaching sentiments to his diary; see the entry for Oct. 23, 1905, *KA*, VII, 55. For Denikin's opinion, see *Put'*, p. 243.

³⁸ Kuzmin had served as a volunteer before the war, had attended the Polytechnique in Paris, and was then mobilized as a reserve officer. He was court-martialed and sentenced to death for the above offense, but the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He was freed by the February Revolution in 1917 and was appointed by Kerensky to be assistant chief of the Petrograd Military District, in which capacity he served from May to October. His career documents in unique fashion a basic sociological reality underlying both revolutions. See Alexander F. Kerensky, *Russia and History's Turning Point* (New York, 1965), p. 273n., and Gen. Alfred Knox, *With the Russian Army 1914-1917*, 2 vols. (London, 1921), II, 620.

³⁹ Kuropatkin to Nadarov, Nov. 28, 1905, *KA*, XI-XII, 319.

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the urban centers. Demobilization of reservists stretched out over the first half of 1906, and the youngest of the Far Eastern veterans were not retired until 1908. The government, cognizant of the dangers of releasing such elements into the already troubled countryside, repeatedly delayed granting discharges. The disruptions of the war left military facilities and the commissary services in a state of complete disorganization: barracks were in disrepair, stores of supplies had rotted or disappeared, the turnover in commissary personnel was phenomenal, finances were short, and the general letdown in discipline and order that follows any major war, even without a revolution, prevailed. All this meant considerable aggravation of the soldiers' usual complaints: worn-out clothing, no straw ticking for mattresses, rotten shoe leather, inedible *shchi* and *kasha*, shortfalls in the meat and bread ration, etc. On top of this were the greatly increased demands for police duties, which by now were thoroughly detested, and the mania of military authorities to interdict the flow of revolutionary literature and to unmask agitators. The soldiers were no longer as submissive as formerly, minor incidents were frequent, and relations with officers were very strained.

Although revolution in the streets had been defeated, the efforts of revolutionary parties to gain influence among soldiers were more intense than ever before, and their techniques grew considerably more sophisticated. In every major metropolitan center revolutionaries, particularly Socialist Revolutionaries and Bolsheviks, put out illicit soldiers' newspapers, which enjoyed considerable popularity in spite of the severe penalties for circulating them. They were, of course, small in format and appeared irregularly, reflecting the frequent arrests of the underground groups that staffed them, but they continually reappeared, mocking the authorities' claims to have stamped them out.⁴⁰ The parties maintained trusted agents among enlisted men and volunteers, through whom they funneled literature and carried on recruitment and propaganda. The Okhrana was obliged to carry its work of planting provocateurs and bribing informers into the barracks, causing jurisdictional disputes with military authorities. (In 1909 a former gendarme official whose name was soon to enjoy public odium,

⁴⁰ The most successful of these was *Kazarma*, of which 13 issues appeared in St. Petersburg in 1906. Between 1906 and 1907 there appeared in Latvia *Golos Soldata*, *Soldat* (13 issues), and *Shtyk* (8 issues); others appeared in Dvinsk, Moscow, Voronezh, Vladimir, Kostroma, and Briansk. See *RDAP*, pp. 70-71, 147-49, 288-93.

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Colonel S. N. Miasoedov, was put in charge of a new branch of the staff organization whose secret mission was to test the loyalty of officers.) By mid-1907 intensive police work had brought revolutionary activity under control, but the experience gained by the participants and their sympathizers was not to go for naught.⁴¹

The real basis of the unrest, however, was not propaganda activity but the lingering influence of war and revolution. As the political motifs receded from the expressions of protest, economic and social grievances stood out. Thus on June 6, 1906, a battalion of the 138th Bolkhovskii Regiment stationed in Riazan, which had only recently returned from the Far East, demanded to see its commander on behalf of better food, back pay, bed sheets, polite treatment, and the right to read newspapers and stroll in public parks. Twenty affairs of this magnitude are registered for the Moscow Military District for 1906 and were mirrored in other districts.⁴²

A number of incidents reveal the close interconnection between unrest in the Army and in the countryside. The governor of Tomsk Guberniia reported on January 7, 1906, that in a certain district "discharged reservists beat up the *volost'* elder, freed arrested peasants, and threatened to tear up the *volost'*, burn down the administrative buildings, and murder the police captain and his men."⁴³ Furthermore, they wandered from village to village, inciting peasants to various kinds of disorders. In Tambov in June 1906 a detachment of the Seventh Reserve Cavalry Regiment had been sent out to put down a peasant rebellion in the village of Petrovka and had refused to fire when ordered. Two days later the soldiers failed to answer their commander's greeting in the customary fashion and requested permission to present their grievances instead. Aside from the usual bed sheet and *kasha* com-

⁴¹ Some of the participants, such as N. V. Krylenko, E. M. Iaroslavskii, and V. A. Antonov-Ovseenko, were active in Bolshevik military organizations in 1917 and will figure in the sequel to this volume. A striking number became successful *apparatchiki* in the Stalin era; Krylenko as the notorious prosecutor in the first show trials of 1930-1931, Antonov-Ovseenko in the Red Army, Iaroslavskii as Party historian, M. A. Trilisser and V. P. Menzhinskii as Chekists and chieftains in the OGPU-NKVD. (Other recognizable names are those of V. V. Vorovskii, a Comintern activist, and M. S. Ol'minskii and M. N. Liadov, whose works appeared in Party journals.) For an extensive list, see *Bor'ba bol'shevikov za armiiu v trekh revoliutsiakh*, pp. 55, 57.

⁴² See *RDAP*, pp. 79-82.

⁴³ *RDM*, Jan.-May 1906, Pt. I, 858.

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plaints, they declared their "full support of the land policy of the Labor Group of the State Duma" and their refusal to use force against people "justly rising up for land and freedom."⁴⁴ The arrest of their leaders triggered a full-scale uprising: they seized weapons and ammunition, freed their comrades, and barricaded themselves for two days. Detachments from several other units had to be called out to subdue them, but some of these had to be withdrawn because of shaky morale. Similar revolts took place at about the same time in Kursk (Kozlovskii Regiment) and Poltava (37th Eletsii and 311th Sevskii regiments).⁴⁵

Although troops were used extensively in 1906 to put down agrarian unrest, great caution had to be exercised. Stolypin himself, when still governor of Saratov, reported that Cossack units were extremely agitated over being ordered to fire on peasants and might themselves revolt.⁴⁶ The same reactions were provoked when soldiers were ordered to fire on strikers. The 88th and 85th Infantry regiments had just returned from Manchuria to their home base of St. Petersburg in April when they were assigned onerous duty in the factories. Soon the regiments were spoiled by their contacts with the workers: they passed resolutions with their own demands, eagerly pored over revolutionary literature, and on several occasions in the course of the summer refused to fire when ordered.⁴⁷ Refusals to perform police duties and use weapons are also recorded in the St. Petersburg Military District for the 145th Novocherkassk and 200th Izhorsk regiments.

Most upsetting of all was the emergence of revolutionary tendencies among the regiments of the guards, hitherto thought to be invulnerable. The revolutionary parties, mindful of the guards' crucial political role, lavished considerable propaganda efforts on them, and not without success. Guards soldiers were tiring of their reputation as hangmen of the workers. The climax came in June 1906 during summer maneuvers at Krasnoe Selo: four thousand soldiers from several different guards regiments gathered on the parade ground to hear orators of the State Duma and revolutionary parties hold forth from the rostrum of the *tsarskaia valika*. Two days later the tsar's "own" regiment, the Preobrazhenskii, refused orders to march to their chief's summer residence

⁴⁴ *RDAP*, p. 85.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 236ff. On the Eletsii and Sevskii affairs, see also Sukhominov, pp. 110-12.

⁴⁶ *RDM*, Jan.-May 1906, Pt. I, 728.

⁴⁷ See *RDAP*, pp. 150-54.

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at the Peterhof because they thought they were to be used to put down the second mutiny of the Kronshtadt fortress. The second battalion eventually submitted, but two others persisted in their recalcitrance and formally adopted a list of demands, including an endorsement of the land program of the Labor Group of the State Duma. The scandal can only be compared with the revolt of the Semenovskii Regiment under Alexander I, as Nicholas himself had once commanded one of the revolting battalions and was still its honorary colonel. The affected battalions were disbanded, and all their officers were transferred to infantry units and replaced by officers from the line, most of them general staff. Nicholas could not have expressed his displeasure in more humiliating fashion.⁴⁸



For the next four years the Russian Army remained in a state of utter prostration. The meticulous organization built up for the eventuality of a war with the Central Powers was in complete disarray. Strategic reserves of supplies and munitions, the best officer and staff material, even the best-trained troops had all been siphoned off for the Far Eastern war. Thus the careful work of General Dragomirov in the Kiev Military District and Generals Gurko and Pozyrevskii in the Warsaw district had gone for naught. For two years the army was preoccupied with reestablishing domestic peace and purging its ranks of harmful elements. (When War Minister Rediger was asked about the training of recruits early in 1908 at a session of the Council of Ministers, he turned to Interior Minister Stolypin and blurted out, "The army isn't training for anything; it's doing your work!"⁴⁹ To accomplish the task as rapidly as possible the term of service was reduced from four years to three for the infantry (with comparable reductions for the other branches of arms), and the recruits called up in 1902 and 1903 were promptly discharged.⁵⁰

Thoroughly shaken by the catastrophes that had overtaken his realm, Nicholas II had handed over de facto military leadership

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 154-58, and Gerua, I, 198.

⁴⁹ From the diary of Gen. A. A. Polivanov, then assistant war minister, Mar. 1, 1908, in *Iz dnevnikov i vospominanii po deiatel'nosti voennogo ministra 1907-1916 gg.*, ed. A. M. Zaionchkovskii (Moscow, 1924), p. 42 (hereafter cited as Polivanov). This is a unique valuable source for the high politics of the Army during this period.

⁵⁰ Kersnovskii, III, 600.

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in 1905 to his formidable uncle, the Grand Duke Nicholas, who in addition to his posts as chief of the St. Petersburg Military District and commander of the guards regiments, was made chairman of the Council of State Defense, a body created at his suggestion. His chief of staff at the military district, General F. F. Palitsyn, was appointed Chief of the General Staff, which for the first time in Russian history was given formal independence of the War Ministry and the right of direct report to the sovereign. Also at the grand duke's suggestion, a separate inspectorate was appointed to oversee each branch of arms. War Minister Rediger was reduced to coequal authority with all these dignitaries and to all intents and purposes yielded first place in the determination of military policy to the grand duke. Since the heads of the military districts, who were simultaneously governor-generals over their respective regions, also had the right of direct report, as did the inspectors and any of the grand dukes who held important posts, there was a multiplicity of offices with access to the throne and no guarantee of communication or coordination among them. The result was an unworkable system of military administration, but neither the tsar nor the grand duke possessed the personal qualities to make it work.

The next four years saw few accomplishments and the recrudescence of unwholesome court influence in military affairs.⁵¹ At the height of the Bosnian crisis, an emergency session of the Council of Ministers under the tsar's chairmanship was thoroughly shaken by Rediger's report that the Army was incapable even of defensive operations.⁵² Sukhomlinov claims that when he took over as Chief of the General Staff (a short tenure until he became War Minister) and requested from Palitsyn documents relating to strategic planning, the latter simply pointed to his forehead, a state of affairs that few military authorities would dispute.⁵³



Between 1909 and 1914 the Russian Army nevertheless made great strides toward recovery and needed reforms. Infantry and

⁵¹ For discussions, see *ibid.*, 598-600, Denikin, *Staraja armia*, I, 9-10, and Danilov, pp. 33-34. Danilov was then chief of the operations section of the General Staff and subsequently Quartermaster General, and therefore his testimony bears some weight.

⁵² Sukhomlinov, p. 175. This negative portrait is also shared by Kersnovskii, III, 603, and Polivanov, p. 63 and *passim*.

⁵³ *Op. cit.*, p. 162. For concurrence, see Danilov, p. 32.

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artillery training were finally put on a modern footing and in some respects (it is claimed), such as marksmanship, surpassed that of other European armies. A new mobilization plan was worked out on entirely new, and probably sounder, military principles. Instead of quartering the bulk of the units with staff and equipment in the frontier districts, with the idea of bringing them up to wartime strength with reserves from the interior, they were to be re-deployed throughout Russia according to demographic concentration, and in wartime they would be brought up to strength first and then conveyed to the field by rail as battle-ready units. The system was in effect by 1912, and regular trial mobilizations kept it in working order. There were other technical and organizational reforms, such as the much improved integration of machine-gun, artillery, and sapper units into regular field formations and an imaginative system of field kitchens, which was studied by other armies. Although in military technology Russia was still far behind its chief foe, Imperial Germany, it was at least experimenting with the beginnings of motorized transport, heavy artillery, and airplanes.⁵⁴

This brief spurt in military modernization took place during the tenure of Sukhomlinov as War Minister, whose position of preeminence was unassailable. For complex political and personal reasons in the guise of military expediency, Nicholas took the bold step in 1909 of reunifying military leadership under the War Ministry, and he appointed Sukhomlinov precisely for his proven qualities of antipathy to the Duma and subservience to himself. The Grand Duke Nicholas's protégés were removed from all important positions, the Chief of the General Staff was again subordinated to the War Ministry, and the Council of State Defense and the right of report of the independent inspectorates were abolished. Sukhomlinov was instructed by the tsar to guard jealously imperial prerogatives in military affairs against the inquisitive Duma, and even against the Council of Ministers, the General Staff, and members of the imperial family.⁵⁵ The partisans of reform were happy to see the reunification of military policy, but were horrified at the monarch's choice and the wall of obscurity that was drawn up around the decision-making process. Sukhomlinov was singularly uncommunicative with subordinates, cynically indifferent to criticism, and seemingly irresponsible in han-

⁵⁴ For discussions, see Kersnovskii, III, 601ff., and Danilov, pp. 33-41.

⁵⁵ See Sukhomlinov, p. 215, and Polivanov, pp. 67, 69, 100.

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dling official business. Routine affairs, such as contact with the Budget Committee of the Duma, cabinet sessions, briefings, and reception of dignitaries, he left to his obliging subordinate, General A. A. Polivanov, one of the few holdovers from the previous leadership.

The literature generally portrays Sukhomlinov as a hopeless nonentity, if not an outright traitor (he was put on trial for treason during the war), and has given him little credit for the advances made during his tenure. A detailed investigation would be required to settle all disputable points, but at least the totally negative assessments of his capacities are unwarranted. In his day—nearly half a century earlier—he had graduated with honors from the General Staff Academy and was given marks of distinction by Alexander II for service during the Russo-Turkish War. During his twelve years as director of the Nicholas Cavalry School he made an acknowledged contribution to the renovation of the cavalry arm, together with his future enemy, the Grand Duke Nicholas. Subsequently, he was Dragomirov's chief of staff in the Kiev Military District during the period of its high accomplishment and succeeded his chief in that office, and he was Kuropatkin's chief of staff for the grand maneuvers at Kursk in 1902, which earned Kuropatkin an illustrious reputation. Some of his protégés from the Kiev Military District later gained recognition, including General A. S. Lukomskii, chief of the Mobilization Section of the General Staff during the reform period and Quartermaster General (following Iurii Danilov) during the war. Some of the military decisions for which Sukhomlinov has been severely criticized (and even suspected of treason), such as the dismantling of the western fortresses and the new mobilization scheme, are defensible on military grounds and rested on the judgment of competent subordinates; nevertheless, the haste with which they were executed earned him a reputation for extreme recklessness and light-mindedness.⁵⁶ In any event, Sukhomlinov deserves credit neither for

⁵⁶ The architect of the dismantling of the fortresses was Quartermaster General Danilov (see op. cit., pp. 41ff.), who plausibly calculated that the cost of improvements necessary to withstand modern heavy artillery and to maintain the fortress defense units could be more profitably invested in new infantry units and modern field equipment. Considerable controversial literature exists on the subject, much of it fed by the firm conviction of Sukhomlinov's treason. For a reasoned, qualified defense of Sukhomlinov, see A. S. Lukomskii, *Vospominaniia generala A. S. Lukomskago* (Berlin, 1922), pp. 88-90.

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the achievements nor the shortcomings of this period: he simply presided over the work of others, without imagination or leadership.⁵⁷ Certain benefits flowed automatically from the simplification of the decision-making process, such as the execution of measures long since prepared by different sections of the General Staff. Other tasks, including essential ones—for example, the organization of field communications, a scheme for wartime production, and the development of a cadre of career NCOs—remained untended.

Support for reform in this period came from several quarters. Reform-oriented general staff officers who were unable to acquire influential positions nevertheless published cautious criticism of prevailing practices in the independent military organ *Razvedchik*. Thus Denikin, his career thwarted by high military politics, nevertheless made his mark as a talented author and critic. Other, younger talents nested in the instructional staff of the General Staff Academy, forming a party of Young Turks who assiduously propagated new military doctrines counter to those of the epigones of the era of Dragomirov and Leer. The acknowledged leader of this group, General N. N. Golovin, had attended the French *École Supérieure du Guerre* and regarded himself as a disciple of General Foch and the method of “applied tactics.” For a brief time this school enjoyed the patronage of the Academy director, General D. G. Shcherbatchev (commander of the Russian forces on the Rumanian Front in 1917); but a counterreform group of older professors, spearheaded by an opportunist of the younger generation, General M. D. Bonch-Bruevich (brother of the famous Bolshevik and a future Red commander), gained the ear of Sukhomlinov, and soon the Young Turks found themselves honorably exiled to provincial command positions.⁵⁸ The same Academy

⁵⁷ For an alternative view of Sukhomlinov, see Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front 1914-17* (London, 1975), pp. 25ff. Stone is more conversant in the technical literature than myself, but his contention that the rivalry between the partisans of the grand duke and Sukhomlinov was along the lines of old-guard cavalymen and courtiers versus “General Staff Establishment” and parvenues cannot be consistently maintained. Sukhomlinov himself was a cavalryman and guardsman (who aspired to be a courtier), and a number of the victims of his persecutions were General Staff reformers (e.g., Gen. N. N. Golovin).

⁵⁸ The best account of the Young Turks of the General Staff is that of Gerua, I, 251-68. Bonch-Bruevich's own memoirs, which were published after he had become a Red commander, do not cover this period; moreover, they are extremely untrustworthy.

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purge elevated General N. N. Ianushkevich to the directorship. A courtier and purely bureaucratic type, this unlikely personage, who had never even commanded a battalion, was appointed in 1914 as Chief of the General Staff and at the war's outbreak as chief of staff to the grand duke, an expression of the tsar's envy of his more popular uncle and his disappointment at being dissuaded from assuming command himself. Though deprived of their base, the Young Turks nevertheless had an important following among the younger general staff officers, who introduced the new tactical doctrines in their areas of command and thereby considerably improved the training of recruits, which proved to be of great benefit in the first six months of the war.⁵⁹

Another circumstance favoring rapid improvement in the Army was the benevolent attitude of the Third Duma. The Octobrist and right-wing Duma leaders, though despising the War Minister for his aloofness and misinformation, were nevertheless partisans of a "Great Russia" and quite generous in their approval of military appropriations. A reform group of generals, among them Vasilii I. Gurko, Lukomskii, and Danilov, were anxious to cultivate a relationship with the Duma in the interests of reform, and they met regularly on an informal basis with influential Duma leaders to explain the needs of the Army. Thus the Duma leaders became well informed about the issues involved and put their power of the purse behind the cause of reform. Parallel with this, Assistant War Minister Polivanov met regularly with the Duma Commission on Defense, which consisted of some of the same figures, and defended the government position forthrightly from the Duma rostrum, gestures that made him extremely popular in this milieu.⁶⁰ The result was that the War Ministry had very little trouble in moving its appropriations through the Duma.

Although much profitable work proceeded in the various sections of the General Staff, the military districts, and the administrations (supply, artillery, and engineers), there was no tangible leadership from the top. General Polivanov was punished for his fancied intrigues against the War Minister by elevation to the

⁵⁹ In his *Av gust chetyr nadtsatogo* (pp. 545-71) Solzhenitsyn has enshrined the Young Turks in the figure of Vorotyntsev, who, Casandra-like, brings a detailed staff report of the true reasons for the demise of Samsonov's army to an unbelieving Stavka.

⁶⁰ See Lukomskii, p. 29, and Polivanov, pp. 35, 56, and *passim*. There is precious little firsthand information on these important political connections.

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State Council in 1912. He had performed a very necessary role as a buffer against the Duma, but he was neither the architect of the reforms nor an enlightened military bureaucrat, as often represented in the literature, an image artificially promoted by Duma circles to discredit Sukhomlinov. Moreover, he was an opportunist and intriguer of the first magnitude, employing the questionable services of Prince Andronikov and of Dubrovin, the leader of the Black Hundreds, to build up his standing at court.⁶¹ The greatest leadership vacuum at the top was at the post of Chief of the General Staff. A talented Chief, in spite of his curtailed powers, could have brought more system and energy into the work of military reform. Sukhomlinov's successor as Chief in 1909, General A. Z. Myshlaevskii, possessed some of the requisite talents, having been a professor at the Academy and head of the chancery of the General Staff Administration, but the rumor that he was soon to replace the incompetent War Minister shortened his tenure in office. His three successors, Generals Gerngross, Zhilinskii, and Ianushkevich, were chosen precisely for their inability to inspire such rumors. A succession of six Chiefs of the General Staff in as many years did nothing to build up the prestige of the institution. In effect, the office had become a cipher, and, as General Gerua noted, the separate sections of the General Staff barely noticed the presence of a Chief.⁶²

It is noteworthy that the military writers who so lavishly praise the improved quality of the troops and the officer cadres in this period hold a very negative view of the capacities of the top military leadership.⁶³ A considerable reservoir of talent had been generated by the Academy and the reformed professional military schools, but it was a long way to the top, and the highest positions were still occupied by many ancient, unprofessional types. True, an extensive purge of command positions after the Russo-Japanese War (known in the literature as "the rape of the innocents") had reduced the number of redundant generals by several hundred, and in 1910 new rules of mandatory retirement were established, but they seem not to have been rigidly followed. Besides favoring guardsmen, Nicholas had a marked partiality for elderly generals who had served under his father, and he frequently intervened to rescue them from dismissal. Also, he never failed to reward a

⁶¹ See op. cit., pp. 31, 41, 44, 60. ⁶² Op. cit., I, 245.

⁶³ See, for example, Kersnovskii, III, 603, and Denikin, *Staraia armia*, I, 19.

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general of proven energy in the suppression of disorders and the detection of revolutionaries, regardless of his military capacities, and these considerations played an important role in prestigious appointments to the military districts in this period. Thus the incompetent and notoriously pro-German General Skalon, a guards cavalry officer and adjutant general of the tsar, was appointed chief of the Warsaw Military District; General Ivanov, one of the few generals of peasant origin (and who in appearance resembled Grandfather Frost), proved his mettle in suppressing the Kronshadt revolt and was rewarded with the Kiev district, even though he lacked general staff credentials; and General Sandetskii, some of whose actions as chief of the Kazan Military District amounted to crimes, concerning which repeated complaints were made, was let off with a mild imperial reprimand, probably because of his zeal in spying out revolutionaries among the officers.⁶⁴ Sandetskii was ultimately transferred to a subordinate post in the Moscow district for disciplinary reasons, but in 1917 he was back in Kazan—and again accused of the same excesses.

Tender concern for the sensitivities of higher commanders was revealed in 1911, when Sukhomlinov arranged for war games on a grand scale in the Winter Palace, doubtless with the idea of accomplishing for his own reputation what Kuropatkin had done for his at Kursk in 1902. All senior commanders of the military districts were given roles corresponding to their projected war-time assignments; topographical maps, mock-ups, dispositions, and strategic objectives were worked out by the General Staff with authenticity of detail. The tsar, very enthusiastic about the project, was to preside over the proceedings as Commander in Chief (naturally his own abilities were not to be put to the test). A half hour before the games were to begin, the tsar held a brief interview with Grand Duke Nicholas, following which the games were canceled; the district chiefs were to consult individually with the War Minister about routine affairs and return home. Sukhomlinov offered his resignation, which was naturally not accepted. His archrival had proven that family influence was still formidable enough to protect high personages from embarrassment.⁶⁵ Delicate attention to the reputation of senior commanders continued to be an earmark of the Russian Army even during the world

⁶⁴ On Skalon, see Brusilov, pp. 50-53, and on Sandetskii, see Denikin, *Put'*, pp. 258ff.

⁶⁵ See Sukhomlinov, pp. 236-38, and Danilov, pp. 101-2.

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war, and the longstanding weakness of giving first consideration to seniority and connections over talent and knowledge remained untouched by reform.



Although subjected to an unaccustomed tempo of change in the years 1909-1914, the Russian Army was nevertheless not progressing rapidly enough or on a broad enough front to meet the challenges to come. It was still overwhelmingly a peasant army, held together by a thin, though improved, educated leadership and nourished by an inadequate economic base. The industrial boom of these years made possible both the tax resources and the productive capacity to effect modest improvements, but it was engaged in an unequal race with a foe of greater resourcefulness and advantages. In the decades of the Russian Army's stagnation, Imperial Germany had already built into its military structure a system of long-term appropriations that insulated it against parliamentary penny-pinching and automatically reaped for it the benefits of rapid industrial expansion and population increase. Not until after the shock of the Second Moroccan Crisis of 1911 did the German Army submit a five-year program substantially improving input: over a billion reichsmarks were appropriated for extraordinary increases, including 136,000 men, heavy and motorized artillery, an air force, and sundry military hardware.⁶⁶ The German General Staff had taken a look at the manpower figures of their own and their adversaries' armies and determined that such an effort was necessary to redress a frightening disparity: France, out of a population base of 40,000,000 had a larger peacetime army than Germany (827,000, plus 157,000 colonials, against Germany's 761,000) and an equal potential wartime strength, even though the German population was 68,000,000; Germany's chief ally, Austria-Hungary, possessed an army of less than 500,000, whereas the Russian colossus had nearly 1,500,000 under arms! (Wartime strengths of the latter were estimated at 3,000,000 and 6,000,000, respectively.)⁶⁷

It was the turn of the Russian General Staff to be frightened, and by early 1914 a "Great Program" was drawn up of extraordi-

⁶⁶ See Walter Goerlitz, *History of the German General Staff 1657-1945* (New York, 1953), p. 149, and Fritz Fischer, *German Aims in the First World War* (New York, 1961), pp. 35-36.

⁶⁷ *RWK*, I, 38-39.

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nary capital expenditures for the next three years. The outlay was to amount to half a billion rubles for nonrecurrent items and an additional 140 million per year in the regular military budget.⁶⁸ It provided for an increase in the yearly recruitment from 435,000 to 585,000 men, which by 1917 would have put the peacetime strength at close to 2,000,000, and for a 20 percent increase in the firepower of the artillery, including heavy field artillery for the first time. The full effect of the program, however, would not be felt until 1917, and the war intervened before it could get off the ground. The same fate overtook a second major organizational reform, the Statute on Field Administration in Time of War, which had been taking shape in various commissions since the Japanese war and was still incomplete at the time of the Sarajevo crisis, which finally hastened it into law three days before the declaration of war.⁶⁹ Germany, of course, was well aware of the Russian moves, and its implacable posture during the crisis was a reflection of its anxiety.

Manpower and budgetary calculations, the fixations of general staffs notwithstanding, were not an accurate index to relative strengths. Potentially, Russia could draw from an even larger reservoir, since only 25 percent of its available manpower had been trained, whereas Germany had trained 52 percent and France 80 percent. The backwardness of the Russian economy cut into effective manpower from two directions: tax resources were inadequate to maintain a larger army, and fewer of those subject to mobilization could be put on the battle line. The Army, faced with long distances, a thinner railway net, and an inability to develop motorized transport and other amenities, required a much larger contingent of support units than did other armies.⁷⁰

The greatest disparity between the Russian and German armies, however, was in advanced military hardware, itself a reflection of the differential in technology and industrial development. The Russian artillery, though excellently trained, still relied almost exclusively on the rapid-fire 3-inch gun of the 1902 model, whereas the German Army had more and heavier guns of recent make. The norm in artillery strength for the Russian infantry was six batteries (48 guns) of 3-inch caliber per division and two batteries (12 guns) per corps of light howitzers of 4.8-inch bore. Of heavy artillery, there were only 164 guns of 6-inch bore in

⁶⁸ See Danilov, pp. 53-54, and Knox, I, xviii.

⁶⁹ See Danilov, pp. 51-52.

⁷⁰ See Golovin, I, 184-87.

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two separate formations designated as a strategic reserve for the entire Army; heavier calibers did not exist. At the same time, every German division was armed with nine batteries (72 guns) of light artillery, three batteries of light howitzers, and two of 6-inch guns. In terms of guns, this was a better than twofold advantage, and in destructive power, many times over.⁷¹ The story was the same with machine guns: the Russian Army had roughly 4,000 at the outset of the war, while the German Army boasted several times that amount. If one adds to this the criminal underestimation of the expenditure of bullets and shell, the attrition rate of rifles, and the limited capacity of Russian industry to step up production in wartime, the tragedy that was to ensue in 1915 becomes comprehensible. Though the general staffs of both the Allies and Central Powers were mesmerized by Russia's limitless reservoir of human material, the Great War was to demonstrate that, in an age of iron and steel, firepower was of more significance than manpower. In the first eighteen months of the war, more than four million Russian soldiers bore agonizing witness to this stark reality.

⁷¹ See A. A. Manikovskii, *Boevye snabzhenie russkoi armii v voinu 1914-1918 gg.*, 4 vols. (Moscow, 1920), III, 215 and passim, and Golovin, I, 54. Again, there is a significant difference between this estimate and that of Stone, pp. 37-38. Stone is perhaps right that the "genius" and industrial might of Germany could be exaggerated and its flaws of traditionalism overlooked, but the very qualifications he makes of his basic picture of rough parity in artillery tend to tip the balance heavily in favor of German superiority in the field in terms of effective firepower per unit, and especially in the heavier calibers.

CHAPTER III



THE GREAT ORDEAL

THE GREAT WAR of 1914-1918 was in every respect a milestone in the history of our era. Utterly unexpected, it gave sudden and powerful release to long-accumulating passions in those layers of society affected by the cultural mobilization of the past half century. The naive and joyous enthusiasm with which millions of men were sent to lemminglike destruction is a phenomenon still difficult to fathom, not because its historical roots cannot be identified—open-ended economic expansion, the new nationalism, the diffusion of culture to the masses, the determination of states to enjoy the full attributes of empire—but because the efforts were stubbornly pursued long after the awesomeness of the continuing sacrifices and the looming annihilation of the traditionally cherished order of things had become palpable. Above all, the war was a Great Folly for the conservative monarchies: the effort that demanded maximum mobilization of public opinion and technical and industrial resources rendered them particularly vulnerable to revolutionary liquidation as a byproduct of protracted war. And the Russian autocracy was the most vulnerable of all.

Russia, later than other European countries, was to achieve this state of cultural oversaturation only in the decade following the Revolution of 1905. Unlike the Japanese war, the First World War generated patriotic enthusiasm on an unprecedented scale. The upper layers of Russian society, including a large segment of the intelligentsia, had undergone a considerable transformation since 1905. Implacable hostility to absolutism of a marked Western libertarian cast had given way to new attitudes that discovered meaning in legal order and state authority, in the nation, the empire, and Slavdom, and even in aesthetic creativity and the private life. This transmutation of inherited ideological values affected virtually every segment of the political spectrum. Many

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of the zemstvo gentry and industrialists who had subsidized revolution in 1905 supported the Octobrist party in 1914, which increasingly imbibed jingoism and Pan-Slavism. The Kadets, who in the Vyborg Manifesto of 1906 had called for the refusal to pay taxes or to serve as recruits in the Army, evolved into a party of legal order and professional elitism, viewing themselves as a loyal opposition and shadow government; by stages they too had become Great Russian nationalists and Slavic partisans. *Vekhi*, a collection of essays edited by Peter Struve, marked the end of the ideological coherence of the radical intelligentsia and a general exodus from the revolutionary parties. Middle-class occupations and professions acquired a new respectability: amnestied refugees from the underground acquired legal identity, went back to school, and became lawyers, doctors, and scholars. Even committed revolutionary figures were pulled by a strong undercurrent toward legitimate endeavors in trade unions, cooperatives, workers' insurance programs, and the legal profession (to combat government illegality). Monographic studies to demonstrate this revolution in consciousness are in short supply, but only a sociocultural phenomenon of this order can explain why so many who were normally hostile to the government suddenly revealed patriotic sentiments and called for an internal political moratorium for the sake of the war, the trauma of 1905 notwithstanding.¹



While the literature is right to stress the enthusiasm of the educated classes, it often erroneously ascribes these attitudes to the lower orders as well. The evidence cited, if any, is the supposedly

¹ Paul Miliukov best exemplifies the Kadets; see his *Vospominaniia 1859-1917*, 2 vols. (New York, 1955), esp. II, 184ff. V. B. Stankevich was a Trudovik (Labor Group of the State Duma) socialist-internationalist who turned officer and authority on trench fortifications; see his *Vospominaniia 1914-1919 g.* (Berlin, 1920), esp. chap. 1 ("Acceptance of the War"). While serving as an artilleryman, Fedor Stepun, an apolitical Silver Age littérateur, developed a neo-Romantic, Nietzschean philosophy of war not unlike that of some of his European counterparts (Peguy, for example). Among revolutionary figures turned "Defensists," Plekhanov, Potresov, Kropotkin, Chaikovskii, and Breshko-Breshkovskaia are only the best known. Stepun makes a number of pithy observations on the sociological and sociocultural aspects of the phenomenon of the "the transformation of revolutionaries of various magnitudes and persuasions into venerable barristers, resourceful corn merchants, scholars, sculptors and washerwomen. . . ." *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia*, I, 198.

flawless mobilization, the low official rate of evasion (4 percent), and the grandiose patriotic demonstrations, which are represented as entirely spontaneous. The mobilization was indeed well planned and executed, and the timetables were for the most part met, but not without numerous major and minor disturbances and other signs that the peasant-reservists were responding with less than total enthusiasm. Vladimir Gurko, Paul Miliukov, and General Iurii Danilov noted with a typical candor that the peasants responded with sullen resignation, unmoved by the demonstrative enthusiasm of the educated public.² D. Oskin, who wrote one of the few chronicles of the war from a peasant's perspective, characterizes the younger soldiers as lighthearted and indifferent but the family men as utterly depressed. Said one: "The war will do nothing for us and the Germans will lick us good, but more important is that it doesn't make sense for the soldier-*muzhik* to fight on the account of the Serbs."³ The reservists of his district followed precedent by going on a drunken rampage: train loads arrived at the mustering point in Tula in an advanced state of inebriation, overwhelmed a small detachment under Oskin, and surged through the provincial capital, breaking shop windows, throwing merchandise into the streets, and foraging for spirits. Oskin's attempt to restrain them by firing into the air met with angry responses: "Get the sons of bitches!" "Just you wait till we get to the front! This isn't peacetime you know!" At the grandiose public ceremonies accompanying their soldiers' departure for the front (attended by a good part of the town's population, presided over by the local officialdom and church hierarchy, and featuring speeches by representatives of all classes of society, including "a student who said he represented the workers"), Oskin observed that the soldiers themselves were morosely silent when they were supposed to cheer, and later in the streets they very unwillingly saluted passing officers.⁴ The account suggests what was probably the typical mood of mobilized peasants: though not inclined to

² See Vladimir Gurko, *Features and Figures of the Past* (Stanford, 1939), p. 538, Miliukov, II, 184, and Danilov, p. 112.

³ *Zapiski soldata* (Moscow, 1929), p. 36. Oskin, who tried unsuccessfully to evade service before the war, was typically peasant in his attitude: "Military service always seemed to me something in the nature of a prison. I could not get used to the idea that they would put a soldier's greatcoat on me and make me over for a few years into a 'gray ox'" (p. 13). (The soldier's overcoat was gray.)

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

open rebellion, they regarded the war as a fruitless venture of the upper classes for which they would have to pay, and they took their vengeance in various subtle and not-so-subtle ways.

Available documents bear witness to the considerable extent of the disorders accompanying mobilization, which, if not equal to those of the Japanese war, were by no means negligible. Heavy destruction of property, beatings of police and officials, and loss of life are recorded for Saratov, Minsk, Tsaritsyn, Perm, Mogilev, Kazan, Baku, Barnaul, Novo-Nikolaevsk, and other Siberian localities.⁵ In most instances these were riots at collection and redistribution centers, but in Mogilev and Kazan mobilized reservists marching cross-country to their destinations rioted out of control, burned and plundered estates, and encouraged local peasants to do likewise. In Barnaul and Novo-Nikolaevsk the disorders amounted to a minor revolution, as railroad stations, businesses, and even private houses were burned and telephone and telegraph communications were cut; jails and weapons storage depots were spared only by timely intervention. Ten persons were killed in Barnaul, seven in Novo-Nikolaevsk. The disorders involved not only provincial capitals but also collection points in surrounding district towns, and as in 1905, the immediate pretexts were often simply insufficient provisions for food and sleeping quarters and rough treatment by reception personnel. A new grievance, however, was the question of subsidies for families left without breadwinners: they had been publicly promised, but no funds were on hand, and no clear rules on eligibility had been worked out. Violence erupted when crowds of reservists and their wives demanded immediate payment and were refused. In Tsaritsyn they broke into the offices of the collection point, assaulted the captain in charge, and ransacked the interior of the building. When a force sent to suppress the disorder opened fire, killing and wounding many, the mobilization process came to a halt.⁶ The governor of Ufa characterized the grievances

⁵ See the documents collected in *RDAF*, pp. 15-46, most of which consist of governors' and police reports. According to records of the Ministry of Interior, cited in I. I. Mints, *Istoriia velikogo Oktiabria*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1967-1973), I, 211, disorders connected with mobilization occurred in 31 districts, resulting in 225 killed and 187 wounded, including 60 police. A Soviet computation for 27 European provinces of Russia claims a total of 505 dead and wounded among the mobilized and 106 among officials. See A. B. Berkevich, "Krestianstvo i vseobshchaia mobilizatsiia v Iule 1914 g.," *IZ*, xxiii (1947), 40-41.

⁶ *RDAF*, p. 16.

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as "purely economic," but the animosity of the crowds, vented on the police, officials, and military officers, points to an underlying rejection of the outer world of authority that had wrenched them from their normal existence. Another provincial governor more accurately captures the soldiers' sentiments, namely, that "the masters [*gospoda*] thought up this war," and that a more thorough job of destruction should be undertaken after the war.⁷

One should not infer, however, that disorders were universal. Gurko claims that mobilization in his province of Tver was carried through in strict order, and the same was undoubtedly the case in many other provinces. Unlike 1905, one does not encounter reports of disorders or numerous desertions en route to the front, perhaps because the soldiers were transported as battle-ready units under the regular officers they knew in peacetime; but it was more likely a reflection of the different context. In 1904 peasant dissatisfaction could be charted on a rising curve in phase with broadly felt social discontent, which found its common denominator in hostility to the war. Relatively speaking, the peasants were better off in 1914, finding it more possible to obtain those coveted parcels of land (meadows, ponds, woodlands) and receiving better prices for their products on the market. Also, a war against the Germans, who in the peasants' minds had negative associations, was closer to home, and the rest of society seemed to be telling them they must go. Unable to sort out the reasons, they simply surrendered to the current and kept their thoughts to themselves.⁸

Unfortunately, even less information is available on the response of workers and urban lower classes, especially outside the capital. Some accounts claim that strikes abruptly halted with the declaration of war and that Russian workers, like their counterparts in Western Europe, confounded their socialist leaders by enthusiastically answering the call to the colors. M. V. Rodzianko,

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 18.

⁸ Gen. Alfred Knox, a British military attaché, encountered a depressed soldier who had left behind a wife and five children. Knox sought to buck him up with the idea that he would return a victor, but the fellow shook his head and replied: "They say it's a wide road that leads to war and only a narrow one that leads home again" (Knox, I, 50). The dispute over whether peasant-soldiers felt true patriotism much exercises military writers. Golovin maintains that they did (in a primitive, "symbolic" form in which God and the tsar replace the fatherland), while Danilov and Engelgardt take a more negative view. See Golovin, II, 119-25, who cites the others.

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for example, goes into raptures over the workers he observed taking part in the patriotic demonstrations; Kerensky grandiloquently claims that "the revolutionary strikers of the evening before marched in their thousands to the Allied embassies" and that "huge crowds from all walks of life cheered their sovereign and sang *God Save the Tsar*."⁹ It would be remarkable indeed if the hundreds of thousands of workers who had recently clashed violently with the police, who were at a high pitch of xenophobia toward society at large, and who had just seen their leaders swept away by arrests and their press organs closed should suddenly throw down the barricades and close ranks with their enemies in a fit of patriotism. It is not improbable, of course, that some of the more educated and politically informed workers (more likely the older skilled workers than the younger and unskilled, more likely Menshevik than Bolshevik) might feel that German militarism had to be resisted or felt bitter when they learned of the surrender of German Social Democrats in the Reichstag, but such workers would hardly constitute more than a fraction of the whole. Moreover, the police would have had no problem in gathering a constituency for patriotic demonstrations from among the urban poor, apart from striking workers. An army of *dvorniki* (concierges), cabbies, servants, peddlers, and rag and bobtail that followed the Black Hundreds could be mobilized as needed. To sort out all of this, one would need more information than is presently available even in Soviet monographs and documentary collections.¹⁰



A chronicle of Russia's fortunes in the manner of conventional military history is beyond the scope of this study, as the reader

⁹ Rodzianko, "Gosudarstvennaia Duma i fevral'skaia revoliutsiia," *Arkiv Russkoi Revoliutsii*, VI (1922), 16-17, and Kerensky, *Turning Point*, p. 128.

¹⁰ See Mints, I, 210-11, who cites such information as is available in Soviet works. It confirms that here and there strikes continued or flared up anew during mobilization and that Bolshevik and other revolutionary organizations put out a few leaflets, but by no means does one obtain as comprehensive and reliable a picture as for the peasantry. There were approximately 242,000 industrial workers in the capital in 1914, of whom about 180,000 were on strike a week before the war's outbreak, while St. Petersburg had a population of over 2,000,000, around half of whom were carrying peasant passports and were engaged in all types of wage labor, petty crafts, and trades other than industry. See A. G. Rashin, *Formirovaniia rabocheho klassa Rossii* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 196, 353, 438.

can consult a number of satisfactory works in English and other languages.¹¹ For the present theme, there is no better place to begin than with Solzhenitsyn's epic on 1914. As its author intended, it capsulizes the full sweep of the tragedy of the Russian Army by observing from every conceivable angle the elements that make for vitality—and morbidity—in an organism as complex as an army. In his view there was a causal connection between defeat and revolution, and therefore the turning point in modern history was not the great October Revolution but the catastrophe at Tannenberg. From this it does not follow, however, that had there been better leadership, better preparation—material, psychological, or otherwise—defeat could have been averted and the contradictions that led to revolution therefore peacefully liquidated. Relative truths must always be put in their broader historical context, which is why the historian cannot begin or end with a single episode, however laden with meaning.

The condition of the army, including the quality of its leadership—as has been demonstrated in the last two chapters—was a reflection of prior social realities. Tannenberg and similar reverses were significant not because they made the common soldier lose an otherwise rosy confidence in the leadership, but because they confirmed his expectations. The Germans in his mind were more clever and powerful than his own masters, who had always sucked his blood and sent him into battle unprepared. Why should it turn out differently this time? Authentic touches of this attitude come out in Solzhenitsyn's chronicle, as in his description of the growing uneasiness and disorderliness of the soldier mass during the unending forced marches into East Prussia, which convinced "even the stupidest illiterate soldier that his officers had blundered hopelessly." He fixes the shape of these convictions in the soldiers' minds with perfect accuracy: "The pilgrims masquerading as soldiers grew sullen and muttered that they were commanded

¹¹ Norman Stone's *Eastern Front* satisfies the demand for a well-researched, general military history. Knox's is an invaluable journal of the war by a knowledgeable military attaché with a nose for the facts, a no-nonsense approach to the war, and a not always sympathetic attitude toward the Russians. Bernard Pares's *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy* (London, 1931) is still a unique chronicle of politics and government during the war and convincingly portrays the moral deterioration at the top, even though Pares is excessively gullible with respect to information gleaned from Duma circles. Also useful is his personal account of his experiences as a roving Red Cross official in *My Russian Memoirs* (London, 1931).

by Germans, and the Germans were deliberately wearing us out and driving us to death so they wouldn't have to fight us."¹²

But what of Solzhenitsyn's passionately etched picture of Russian soldiers fighting stubbornly and well in spite of bad leadership? The answer is that for the most part they did so in the opening months of the war, and even thereafter, but with declining frequency. How an army fights is as much a function of training and the necessities of survival as it is of inward motivation. The first-line units, which were composed exclusively of recently trained regulars, often outperformed the enemy, even the Germans, in fighting skills. In the second-line units the cadre elements and the reservists whose active service had taken place since 1909 were reasonably well trained and disciplined, but their numbers seldom made up more than half of any given unit. The socially restless elements were primarily the older reservists of pre-1909 vintage, in other words, well-established family men who in their previous military experience had tasted of the 1905 turmoil and its aftermath. In 1914 they would comprise roughly 1.8 out of the slightly less than 5 million men in the active ranks of the mobilized army—36 percent of the total, but more than 50 percent in most second-line units.¹³

Although Tannenberg was a severe reverse, and although there were other lesser defeats and disappointments, one cannot attribute them as yet to a crisis in morale. Purely technical difficulties counted for much more: too many generals like Artamanov and Zhilinskii, poor field communications, disproportionate firepower, an archaic supply system, and similar shortcomings. Except for Tannenberg and several near catastrophes on the Austrian Front, the Russian Army acquitted itself well for the rest of 1914: it conquered nearly all of Galicia and Austrian Poland, taking a phenomenal number of prisoners and weapons, and it repulsed strong German thrusts before Warsaw, Łódź, and along the northern Vistula. The dark cloud of Tannenberg might well have dissipated had these fortunes continued. But the long-term prospects for the Russian Army had already been compromised

¹² *Avgust chetyrnadtsatogo*, pp. 131, 132 (author's translation). Many Russian generals, of course, bore German names—Rennenkampf, Ewarth, Plehve, and Sievers, for example (see below, pp. 91-92). For Solzhenitsyn's central thesis on the war, see *ibid.*, pp. 349-50.

¹³ This estimate is based on Golovin's statistics (I, 76-77, 81), subtracting the 435,000 yearly levy for 1907-1910.

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by two ominous developments, whose meaning was only just beginning to be absorbed by the command: first, the expenditure in shell and bullets astronomically exceeded all prewar calculations, and by the end of the year supplies were fast running out; and second, despite the limited successes, casualty rates forecast the extinction of the trained cadres and a fantastic attrition among their replacements. Acute shortages in rifles and machine guns also developed, in spite of ambitious prewar programs. All armies in the First World War, of course, had to face up to the unexpectedly gluttonous demands of modern warfare and gear up their establishments accordingly, but Russia's still feeble economy was the least prepared to meet the challenge.

The workhorse of the Russian artillery, the rapid-fire 3-inch field piece, ate up enormous quantities of shell. It deserved a good share of the credit for the victory at Gumbinnen and had inflicted massive losses on the enemy in the Galician and western Polish campaigns, and again on the Germans along the lower Vistula in November. Prewar calculations based on the experience of the Japanese war had led to the adoption of a stockpiling norm of a thousand shell per gun, a figure that was substantially realized shortly before the war.¹⁴ But no plans had been made for stepped-up production in wartime, because the General Staff assumed a war of a few decisive campaigns (ending in a Sedan), for which the stockpiles were thought to be adequate. The heavy fighting of the first few weeks made it obvious that all prewar calculations were outmoded and that a critical factor in success would be the quantity of shell available to the artillery. By the end of August front commanders were bombarding Stavka and Petrograd with urgent requests.¹⁵

Officials in the Artillery Administration reacted skeptically to these importunities, as they knew the tendency of battery and

¹⁴ Danilov, p. 49, and Manikovskii, III, 7-8.

¹⁵ Manikovskii (III, 74-85) cites a number of staff communications to this effect, including the following from Grand Duke Nicholas to the Main Artillery Administration, Sept. 19, 1914: "Three weeks of battle on the Southwestern Front clearly indicate that their center of gravity lies in the liberal employment of artillery fire, without which no tangible results can be achieved. With the practice of deep entrenchment in parallel rows and extensive deployment of machine guns along the entire front, no forward movement of the infantry is possible without energetic, uninterrupted artillery fire clearing the access to the enemy. As a consequence, the expenditure of shell has reached unheard-of proportions" (p. 78).

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brigade commanders to hoard supplies, and, moreover, during the most intense period of the Japanese war, the battle of Mukden, shell were used up at a rate far less than that now claimed. They remained convinced that their own estimate of 300,000 per month was more than enough, and that figure could be met in the short run by accelerating the movement of stockpiles. As a result of interdepartmental disputes, the key decisions on re-tooling factories were not made until the end of the year, and opportunities to place orders abroad were passed up. By heroic efforts, the problem of delivery time was resolved, so that by the end of November the full stockpile of 6,520,000 shell had been moved to the front; but the result was that the commanders at the front therefore saw no reason to economize and thus by the end of the year were virtually out of shell, whereas new production had not yet hit its stride. The 300,000 figure, though achieved by current production by March 1915, proved to be far too low, so that for most of 1915 the Russian artillery was starved for shell.¹⁶ The tragedy of the "Great Retreat" was the result. The General Staff and the Artillery Administration had committed the typical error of preparing for the previous war.

The second unpleasant fact that had to be reckoned with was the unprecedented rate of casualties. Frontal attacks on fixed positions, sudden flanking maneuvers by the enemy, retreats under hot pursuit, and even holding fixed positions under heavy artillery fire were extraordinarily costly in life and limb. Nightmares of the dead and dying littering the battle fields and clogging the trenches, of the groans of countless wounded lying in the mud around dressing stations and field hospitals, of the long, dreary chains of the captured, and of the backed-up hospital trains jamming the railroads fill the pages of eyewitness accounts. Entire regiments and divisions were sometimes destroyed in a single action; others were worn down over longer periods to a half, a third, a tenth of their normal strength. In October and November very few new replacements were arriving, as they were supposed to come from the *ratniki* of the first category, which had not yet been trained.

¹⁶ This was an allocation of little more than one and a half shells per gun per day, whereas under heavy battle conditions 50 rounds per gun per day was regarded as "normal" and could be greatly exceeded. See Knox, I, 175, who was informed by Gen. Potocki of the Artillery Administration that the Grenadier Corps averaged a daily 83 rounds per gun, and the Second Guards Rifle Brigade, 67.

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The crack Grenadier Corps was said to be at 40 percent of its normal strength at the end of November, while the Third Caucasus Corps had lost all but 6,500 of its original complement of 32,000; the 45th Division, having only 9,000 of its original 14,000 when it went into heavy action at Kielce, Poland, on November 19, lost 50 percent of its remaining effectives in one night and was reduced to 3,000 a few days later.¹⁷ The regiments of the guards, in contrast to the Japanese war, were expended with reckless prodigality, having been thrown into every difficult situation since the beginning of the war. The guards' two rifle divisions lost 9,000 men in a single action at Opatov on October 4. The Grenadier Regiment was down to nine officers and 500 men by November 25; by the same date the Semenovskii's had lost thirty officers (ten killed, twenty wounded) and 3,000 men since the beginning of the war; in the action along the Narev early the next year the guards regiments were said to have lost 10,000 officers and men.¹⁸ General Knox estimated the Russian losses in the action on the lower Vistula in November at 17,000 dead, 53,000 wounded, and upwards of 30,000 captured—100,000 in all (he put the German losses even higher, at 120,000, with 15,000 captured).¹⁹ General Ruzskii, commander of the Northern Front, reported to Stavka that in the battle before Łódź (early November) many units had lost 70 percent of their effectives, and Brusilov, though giving no hard figures, states that by winter his divisions were at less than half strength and utterly exhausted.²⁰

Aggregate figures for this period of the war are hard to come by, but Denikin puts the total losses in the Galician campaign (mid-September) at 230,000 for the Russians and 326,000 for the Austrians; Kersnovskii puts the losses at Tannenberg at 100,000 (other estimates run much higher) and for the entire East Prussian campaign, 250,000.²¹ If Russian losses had continued at this rate for the balance of the year—and, given the scale of the fighting, they could well have done so—they would have amounted to 2,400,000. There is good reason to believe that the actual figure was in the neighborhood of 1,800,000, of which around 396,000 (22 percent) probably represent fatalities,

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 180, 182, 183, 187.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 189, and P. Rodzianko, *Tattered Banners*, p. 167.

¹⁹ Op. cit., I, 199.

²⁰ Danilov, p. 247, and Brusilov, p. 133.

²¹ Denikin, *Put'*, p. 335, and Kersnovskii, III, 651, 666.

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slightly over half (918,900) at the wounded, and the remainder (486,000 or 27 percent) those captured.²² Thus it is no exaggeration to say that by the end of 1914, well before the Great Retreat, nearly half of the prewar trained manpower had been expended and the remainder was dwindling rapidly.

The first two months of 1915 offered no respite. At the end of January the Germans made a lightning thrust at the unsuspecting Tenth Army, which defended disadvantageously against the Masurian lakes. The battle almost became a second Tannenberg, as the flanking corps were driven apart and the XX Corps in the center was surrounded and destroyed in the Avgustovo Forest (40,000 men, most of them taken prisoner); the key fortress of Grodno, which guarded the lifeline to Warsaw, was seriously threatened with a siege. Simultaneously, the Germans moved southward out of East Prussia (reversing Samsonov's route), and in three weeks of heavy fighting tried to force the Narew. The line held north of the Narew, and the enemy was pushed back from Grodno, but the Russian (and German) losses were staggering. In February and early March the Third and Eighth armies were heavily engaged in taking the Carpathian passes and the fortress of Przemyśl, costing another 200,000 casualties.²³ In the meantime, 2,000,000 more men had joined the ranks, 1,400,000 of them new recruits of the 1914 and 1915 call-ups, and the rest, twenty-one- to twenty-six-year-olds of the untrained *ratniki* of the

²² Computed from Tables 1 and 9 of *RMVTs*, pp. 17, 23, with various corrections as suggested by Golovin, I, chap. 5. Taking the total trained manpower, allowing a liberal half million for permanent service in the rear and a lead time of two months for the training of untrained *ratniki* and new recruits, and *subtracting* the official figures for the field army, one discovers a manpower deficit of 1,700,000 in October 1914, 2,300,000 in January 1915, and 3,780,000 in May 1915. There seems to be no way to account for this deficit other than as casualties, and if so, they are staggeringly higher than the General Staff data based on field reports (Table 22 of *RMVTs*, p. 30), which record only 1,200,000 by May 1, 1915, 123,000 of them fatalities. Nevertheless, the estimate given here is more consistent with the micro data already cited and the known scale of the fighting.

²³ Kersnovskii, III, 711. See also the detailed account in Danilov, chaps. 14 and 15. Knox (I, 240) claims that the retreat through the Avgustovo Forest cost 110,000 men in prisoners alone (from all three corps). For a grisly account of the aftermath by Russian reconnaissance (a tableau of frozen bodies in all conceivable battle postures), see Vladimir S. Littauer, *Russian Hussar* (London, 1965), pp. 182-83.

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first category.²⁴ As the military writers say, these were "good fighting material" (no *borodachi*), but they could only be given four to six weeks hasty training and were regarded with utter despair by front commanders.

Just as the front was beginning to feel the full effect of the shell and manpower shortages, a new catastrophe turned up in the form of deficits in rifles and ammunition. Judicious planning by the General Staff had provided an abundance of rifles upon mobilization, enough for every soldier, including noncombatants. The stockpiles were so great that rifle production had practically ceased before the war in favor of machine guns, and a large number had been surrendered to equip the Serbian Army. Production was slow in starting up again, and orders placed in Japan and the United States did not come through for more than a year. In the meantime, there were no means to replace the discarded weapons that littered the constantly fluctuating battle lines, and it was a long time before the command recognized the importance of systematic recovery. Thus a battle casualty usually meant a lost rifle. Furthermore, a large number of rifles were damaged or worn out with continuous use. For a time, the shortages could be made up by taking rifles from noncombatant troops or rearming them with Berdanki of Turkish war vintage, but the recruits of early 1915 were trained and sent to the front without rifles, and commanders were instructed to arm them with weapons recovered from the field. Needless to say, these men did not feel or look very much like soldiers.²⁵

Naturally, these deficiencies could not but affect morale and revive simmering resentments. Sources that reflect the mood of the soldiers are scarce for this period of the war, but Quartermaster General Danilov, who was abreast of all information coming into Stavka, confirms that by the year's end desertion and self-wounding had become major problems, sure signs of a crisis in morale.²⁶ The accounts by fighting generals—Denikin, Gerua, Brusilov—gloss over the signs of disaffection and emphasize al-

²⁴ According to *RMVTs*, Table 1, p. 1, and Golovin, I, 78-81.

²⁵ Domestic production reached 35,000 per month by the end of 1914 and 50,000 per month by April 1915, but this yielded only 307,000 rifles for more than 2,000,000 men. See Manikovskii, I, Table 1, p. 34. For orders placed abroad, see *ibid.*, pp. 45ff. References to the dearth of rifles at the front—and the tragic consequences—are legion.

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 248.

most exclusively the great hardships and heroic accomplishments of their men. However, those closer to the soldiers' level give a different picture. Lobanov-Rostovsky witnessed the court-martial of a soldier who struck an officer while drunk. As an object lesson, the culprit was tied to a post in the middle of the bivouac, where his cries for mercy could be heard all day. That night, with the regiment assembled, the sentence of death was carried out, despite cries of "pardon" from the darkness. A regiment that Lobanov regarded as hitherto exemplary had been brought to the verge of mutiny.²⁷ Estates of Polish and Baltic magnates proved a very great hazard during campaigns: looting, wanton destruction, and breaking into wine cellars often had to be dealt with by summary shootings. It rankled deeply when officers did much the same thing in more organized fashion—without punishment.²⁸

In Sergeant Oskin's narrative of the Galician campaign, the officer figures are swinish from start to finish, with the exception of his regimental commander, Colonel Museius, who showed a fatherly concern for the needs of his men and never flinched in battle. His company commander, Captain Andreev, constantly gave reckless orders that led to needless casualties, but was himself a coward and a drunkard. His replacement, whom the men knew from garrison duty in Tula as an idler, gambler, and syphilitic, was always in a quandary in battle, looking in vain to his sergeant for enlightenment and invariably making the wrong decisions. On a forced march he tried to plead dysentery but was "ordered" by the commander to get well; he nevertheless lagged behind and shot himself in the finger. Once when facing heavily entrenched Austrian positions, Oskin was promised a St. George's cross if his detachment could cut a path through the barbed wire, a task that artillery fire had been unable to accomplish. Crawling forward, he saw countless Russian dead hanging on the foremost of three thickly laid rows of wire. Cursing the St. George's, he brought his men back to safety.

During the storming of the Carpathians, Oskin's unit was battered and frozen, and had not eaten a warm meal for days as they pushed through the deep drifts toward the summit, which was strongly occupied by the Austrians. One morning the commander lined up his men, had two large sides of lamb brought out, and promised a feast—after they had taken the ridge! The

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

²⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 64-65, 71, 81, 103, and *passim*.

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climb took five hours in icy winds, in the course of which Captain Savitskii stopped for a rest and ordered Oskin to take the company to the summit. They took heavy losses, of course, and never got back for the feast.²⁹

This unvarnished soldier's-eye view is a necessary antidote to the conventional military accounts, even though many officers do not deserve Oskin's negative portrayals. The feeling never left the soldiers that they were being used and recklessly expended by the rich and powerful, of whom their officers were the most visible, immediate representatives. Occasionally soldiers burst out with their anger, as did a badly wounded soldier to Sir Bernard Pares, then a floating Red Cross observer on the Russian Front: "It had to be! Our Emperor had to be rich!"³⁰ The illusion persisted of the naively trustful, infinitely durable soldier-*bogatyr*, but inwardly the peasant-soldier was experiencing the war in his own way and storing up vengeful thoughts against those who spoke so glibly of dying for tsar and fatherland—but left him to do the dying.



On April 19, 1915, Mackensen's heavy guns fell with crushing force on the unprepared Third Army near Gorlice, touching off the retreat that was not to come to a halt until occupied Galicia, Poland, Lithuania, Courland, and most of White Russia were yielded to the enemy. In the course of five months of unremitting rear-guard fighting, the Russian Army gave up close to a million in dead and wounded and another million in prisoners of war.³¹

²⁹ Op. cit., p. 58.

³⁰ *My Russian Memoirs*, p. 290. Sir Bernard took it as a touching declaration of faith in the tsar by the simple soldier, but in *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy* (p. 235) he recounts the same incident, more plausibly, as a bitter expression of despair, which he links to the attitude: "Why don't they send all the gentlemen to the front?"

³¹ Prisoner of war statistics of the Central Powers, which can be regarded as highly reliable, amount to 1,042,200 (cited in Golovin, I, 145-46, the Austro-Hungarian figures being adjusted slightly for noncoincidental dates). Golovin puts the dead and wounded for the period May-October 1915 at 1,410,000, making plausible corrections to the General Staff data. This author is inclined to regard his figures as too high; at least 200,000 should be transposed to the earlier period, for which Golovin's estimates (p. 157) appear too low and the disparity in the monthly casualty rates too high (135,000 in his estimate up to May 1, 1915, and 235,000 monthly thereafter). Golovin's total for the losses in the war up to November 1,

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The reasons for the retreat were obvious to every soldier: the enemy could concentrate massive amounts of men and guns at any point he chose and literally grind the Russian formations to pieces, whereas the latter lacked the wherewithal to reply. Though the depleted Russian divisions were being rapidly filled up with recruits, the latter came untrained and with bare hands. Lacking the capacity for offensive operations, the Russian divisions had to be spaced out along every mile of the winding Polish salient and wait for the enemy to strike. They could have prepared for the inevitable blow by digging in, but the Russian Army had never been trained for that type of warfare. Brusilov claims that his orders to build trenchworks in depth in the Carpathians were systematically flouted by lower commands.³² Trenches would have been of more use in the region of the Third Army to the west, where they were also neglected. Mackensen's successful penetration immediately threatened the rear of the other three armies on this front, which were then obliged to come down out of the Carpathians. The mood of these armies turned immediately into frustration and rage: the Carpathian heights had been gained by months of exhausting effort and now they were being surrendered without firing a shot. In Oskin's account the soldiers no longer bothered to conceal their feelings and openly blamed their officers for the muddle. They were particularly incensed over the scorched earth policy, which on occasion reached absurd lengths. ("That's the command for you! Just like the Japanese war, as soon as there's a retreat they give the order to burn everything! *Svoloch!*")³³ In one case, a Galician peasant who continued to plough while the battle raged all around him was shot as a "spy," but to the peasant-soldiers he was one of their own, and they could not help but admire his courage.

Although the big guns could destroy large sections of the Russian line with impunity, the German Army was unable to achieve a breakthrough or to encircle large contingents. Each day the

1915—4,360,000 (1,740,000 prisoners of war, 2,620,000 dead and wounded)—can be regarded as a firm figure, consistent with mobilization and field army totals, while the General Staff figure of 3,400,000 is not consistent. Bernard Pares was given a figure of 3,800,000 casualties as of July 1, 1915, by the War Ministry to carry back to his government; although he considered that figure to be an understatement (he had witnessed a good bit of the carnage firsthand), it is in fact quite accurate.

³² Op. cit., p. 162.

³³ Op. cit., p. 106.

Russians retreated to prepared positions, closing the gaps in the line and leaving a screening force behind. The Russian artillery, though starved for shell, was often used to good effect to break up mass attacks and was regularly moved back in time to prevent capture. In the first phase of the operation, the evacuation of occupied Galicia, the retreat was measured and orderly, forcing the attacking armies to take two full months to reach Russian Poland. The price the Russians paid, however, was in tens of thousands of untrained, often unarmed *ratniki*, who went through the revolving door into captivity or through the meat grinder of bombardment. The staffs and skeleton units remained intact, soaking up ever-new contingents of replacements.³⁴

In July the Germans began large-scale operations on the northern flank of the Polish salient, again putting pressure along the Narew and driving into Courland. The forces in Poland were threatened with complete encirclement, and to escape the "Polish sack" four Russian armies were obliged to make a race for the narrowing exit. In two weeks of staged withdrawal, destroying everything that could be of use to the enemy, the exhausted Russian armies reached the line of Osovets, Białystok, and Brest-Litovsk, where they assumed that strong defenses had been prepared along the line of fortresses.³⁵ The news that all of them were taken without making a stand (Osovets fell on August 9, Brest-Litovsk on August 13), and the discovery that there were no fresh armies manning fortified entrenchments turned the mood of the troops, officers, and soldiers alike into angry cynicism.

The retreat now took the form of wholesale desertions, plunder, and disorderly flight, compounded by the intermingling of hundreds of thousands of Polish, White Russian, and Jewish refugees. The unexpected scale of the disaster nourished the conviction that only treason and incompetence in high places could be responsible, particularly with respect to the inexplicable surrender of the fortresses. Miasoedov and Sukhomlinov soon became household words at the front as well as in the rear, while in the high

³⁴ Military data on the Great Retreat is taken primarily from Kersnovskii, III, 727ff.; characterizations of various sorts are from Knox, I, chap. 8, and personal accounts by Gerua, Denikin, and Brusilov. On the fighting quality of the *ratniki* and on the "meat grinder," see Kersnovskii, III, 722-23.

³⁵ For an extraordinary personal chronicle from an unusual viewpoint, see Lobanov-Rostovsky, chap. 5. The author headed up a demolition team and thus witnessed many events away from the fighting lines, particularly the refugees and the scorched earth policy.

command spy hunting and scapegoating assumed grand proportions.³⁶ If there was a moment when the popular psyche snapped and inwardly disassociated itself from the fate of an incompetent leadership (in the sense formulated by Solzhenitsyn), it was during this final stage of the Great Retreat. A government that had dragged them into a war they could not win, that could not even provide them with weapons and shell, that surrendered fortresses without a fight, and that allowed Germans in its highest ranks while pretending to fight them was certainly not worthy of further sacrifice. A Bolshevik volunteer-intellectual, A. Pireiko, depicts a half-baked *praporshchik* trying to explain to his badly shaken soldiers the reason for the retreat: "‘In our army are many traitors and spies in the high command, like War Minister Sukhomlinov, whose fault it is that we don’t have any shell, and Miasoedov, who betrayed the forts to the enemy. . . .’" A soldier-cook drew the logical conclusion: "‘A fish begins to stink from the head. What kind of tsar is it who surrounds himself with thieves and chiselers? It’s clear as day that we’re going to lose the war.’" Pireiko also captures the popular image of "the German," which was now accommodated to the defeatist mood:

The majority of the soldiers reckoned that the chief culprits in the war were the Germans, who came to Russia and picked off the best jobs in the factories and industry, even in the army, because the tsarina was German. But that wasn’t enough for them, so they undertook the war to beat Russia for good.³⁷

³⁶ Col. S. N. Miasoedov, a long-time protégé of Sukhomlinov who had had a checkered career in the army, the corps of gendarmes, and military counterintelligence, was executed as a spy in March 1915, allegedly for passing information to the enemy that led to the collapse of the Tenth Army. Although he was a thoroughly disreputable character and fully deserved his difficulties in the past, it is more than probable that he was a victim of the climate of spy mania, and of Gen. Bonch-Bruевич and the grand duke in particular. It was likewise a convenient way of discrediting Sukhomlinov, paving the way for his equally questionable conviction for treason, which was designed to placate the liberal-patriotic public during the period of "reconciliation" in 1915. The literature is extensive and contradictory, but is discussed in detail in George Katkov, *Russia 1917: The February Revolution* (New York, 1967), chap. 6. Although I am generally critical of Katkov’s right-wing bias in handling evidence, I am constrained to agree with his conclusions on this episode. See also Stone, pp. 197-98, who concurs.

³⁷ *Na fronte imperialisticheskoi voiny* (Moscow, 1935), pp. 35-36.

The pouring of hundreds of thousands of unarmed recruits into the teeth of German artillery was now easily seen as part of a scheme of deliberate extermination hatched by the "internal German." The simple peasant or worker was familiar with a good many different kinds of Germans—immigrant skilled workers and engineers, factory owners, colonists (who competed for rented lands of southern estates), Baltic barons, and figures at court (Fredericks, Kleinmichel, Dietrichs, Grabbe), in the bureaucracy (Stuermer, Bark, Krivoshein), and in the military command, especially in the guards units (a long list)—and they all fitted somehow into the picture. In all these connections the German was admired and envied for his cleverness in working his way into favorable positions and hated for his arrogance and unvarying success. Although a good many of the personages taken to be German were actually Swedes, Finns, Jews, and other nationalities, many of whom had resided in Russia for generations, it was of little consequence. If initially the peasant felt a certain sympathy for fellow Slavs, the effort now seemed useless, as they had been monumentally betrayed. A cynical formulation gained currency in the trenches: "We're from Tambov. The Germans won't get that far! [*My tambovtsy. Do nas nemets ne doidet*]."³⁸

The Russian Army was held together by the slenderest of threads in the fall of 1915, as desertions to the interior, open contempt for officers, and cynical disobedience to orders all reached massive proportions. Various accounts try to capture one aspect or another of the desperate situation, but sometimes one document speaks most eloquently of all, for example, this order to all units under General Ivanov, commander of the Southwestern Front:

The Ministry of the Interior has received information about extraordinary plundering in the rear of the army, particularly on the Western Front. Instances are cited of disobedience to officers, including one ending with murder in Baranovichi. Prince Shcherbatov, Minister of the Interior, personally observed on September 16 in Orsha a spectacle of unheard-of disorderliness among a crowd of two and a half thousand recuperated wounded. On the railroads an increasing number of soldiers lack documents. These deserters are stirring up

³⁸ This phrase appears in endless variants in almost every account of the war, but see Golovin, II, 123.

the people with imaginary stories slandering the commanding staff.³⁹

Sometimes also the fate of an individual speaks for that of millions. Oskin, for all his animus against officers, was a determined fighter and several times received high decorations for bravery in action; but he felt deeply humiliated by the Great Retreat. The rape of the Galician city of Lvov during its evacuation by the Russian civilian and military elite (one of Oskin's superiors carried off the family silver of the Radziwiłłs) and the inhuman treatment of the refugee population, many of them peasants like himself, brought forth a sudden inward rupture. Evacuated after being wounded (his leg was amputated above the knee), he was sent to the hospital of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth in Moscow, where his needs were attended to by solicitous aristocratic ladies in white. But even this offended him. He started to read newspapers, to follow the Duma and ministerial politics and the final phases of the retreat. What prompted him to make the final break, he does not say—perhaps the last straw was the general on the Kiev railroad platform who screamed at him, "Don't you know it's forbidden to enlisted men here! *Svoloch!*"—but without waiting for his discharge, he took off with a deserting comrade for the latter's *khutor* (farm) in Siberia. They arrived only to find that it had been burned down by Cossacks who had "requisitioned" his cattle for the government and raped his wife and his mother. (The father and a brother had witnessed the scene, but were too drunk with home-distilled brew to intervene.)⁴⁰



To round out the picture of the war a good many political and social developments should be pursued, as well as an account of how the soldiers survived another year and a half of the slaughter. The retreat had put the government on the defensive and forced a number of concessions to the Duma and zemstvo groups, which

³⁹ *RDAF*, pp. 128-29. The report recounts an incident in which soldier replacements jumped off a train; the echelon commander fired on them and in turn was mobbed and stoned by angry soldiers. The tsar is represented as personally intervening and disciplining other officers of the echelon for not halting the disturbance by force of arms. As a general order designed for the edification of the troops, it doubtless had the opposite effect of that intended.

⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, pp. 121, 153-54, and *passim*.

were quickly reversed when the tsarina and Rasputin prevailed and Nicholas assumed command of the Army. Since these events have been so admirably chronicled by Sir Bernard Pares in *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy*, this discussion will be limited to changes in the complexion and mood of the Army. In a sense, the main events of the war were already over, as the front straightened out in a north-south line through Dvinsk and Pinsk, bending westward along the northern Dvina to include Riga, and as drudging trench warfare set in. Even the dramatically successful Brusilov offensive can be left aside, since in essence it simply piled on more casualties and traumas of the kind already described without materially affecting the strategic situation.

By the end of 1916 the number of Russian males put into uniform reached the monumental figure of 14,600,000 (it was to reach 15,300,000 in the fall of 1917). The Army in the field numbered 6,900,000, with another 2,000,000 in rear garrisons, leaving over 5,500,000 to be accounted for in casualties. The available official figures on manpower attrition are notoriously unreliable, but fortunately the German monarchies kept excellent records of war prisoners, allowing a firm figure of 2,100,000, which was to grow to 2,400,000 in 1917. This leaves 3,600,000 dead, seriously sick, and wounded. Actually, the number of wounded is by no means reflected in this total, as at least a million wounded returned to the ranks after recovery, while countless others were taken into captivity. Only 634,614 men are registered in official statistics as killed or dying of wounds, but General Golovin rightly corrects this by adding a million, noting that those missing in action were incongruously lumped with prisoners of war, exceeding reliable data on the latter by 1,240,000.⁴¹

⁴¹ See Golovin, I, 150 and passim. Both Stavka and the Mobilization Section of the General Staff made periodic estimates based on field reports, but Golovin, who knew firsthand the tendency of staffs to manufacture data for Stavka's benefit, is justifiably skeptical of the tabulated data. Using the aggregates of mobilization data and current men under arms, front and rear, he obtains a lump figure for manpower expenditure (as in nn. 22 and 31 above) and, subtracting the reliable data of the Central Powers on war prisoners, distributes the remainder according to ratios on the Western Front, essentially 1:2.4 of dead to wounded. This ratio, however, becomes meaningless for the later period because hard data are lacking on the number and speed of recovery of wounded who returned to the front (census data on discharges and extended leaves allow a rough estimate of 600,000, but there are no data even approximating the number remaining under hospital care). Golovin is reluctant to count all the 1,200,000 missing in

Thus, the total Russian loss of life was nearly equal to that of the Germans (1,800,000), even though the latter fought on for an additional year.

In the course of 1914 all untrained *ratniki* of the first category, up to age thirty-two (500,000 men), had been conscripted, and by April of 1915, up to age thirty-six, yielding another full million. Yet this vast manpower was frittered away in 1915 faster than it was being tapped, so that at the conclusion of the Great Retreat, even after the addition of a new crop of twenty-year-olds (550,000 men), the field army was only slightly larger than at the beginning of the year.⁴² This grim arithmetic persuaded the government that it would have to dip into its last major resource of manpower, the *ratniki* of the second category. For this, existing law had to be changed, because as sole breadwinners these men were exempt from front-line duty; accordingly, a law was rushed through the Duma during the brief honeymoon of August 1915. Villages were suddenly made aware that the last barrier had been removed against the disruption of their economies and the extermination of their menfolk. Although the first call affected only the twenty- to twenty-four-year-olds, in October two more age groups were added. Obviously, older groups would soon follow, as there was no further source of recruits until the next batch of nineteen-year-olds matured the following spring. Though young, these second-category *ratniki* were in most cases the only able-bodied males in newly established families with small children, or the sole support of widowed mothers and younger brothers and sisters.⁴³

action as fatalities, presuming upwards of 200,000 as having been evacuated without the knowledge of their superiors, but just as logically one could speculate about the number of evacuated who died en route. The official number given for "died of wounds" Golovin rightly regards as so small as to defy credibility. In any event, 1,600,000 fatalities should be regarded as a minimum figure and 1,850,000 as a maximum. For Golovin's discussion, see Vol. I, chaps. 4-6, esp. tables on pp. 81, 145-46, 184. There is no Soviet scholarship of recent date that is particularly helpful.

⁴² The total number of replacements to reach the front in 1915, up to September 1, was 2,300,000, whereas the losses were at least 2,400,000. The size of the field army in January 1915, by official data, was 3,850,000 (Table 9 of *RMVTs*).

⁴³ Golovin (I, 89-97) discusses the calling up of the second-category *ratniki* and cites extensively the discussions in the Council of Ministers that confirm that the Duma was called upon to pass the law precisely to lend

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Authorities were able to carry through these levies only with the greatest of difficulties. Trivial incidents provoked riots, soldiers' wives mobbed district induction points, inductees haggled collectively with authorities and deserted individually or en masse during transfers, and repressive action worked passions to a fever pitch. In the district town of Bolkhov two thousand conscripts rioted over exemptions granted to workers of a small boot factory, which resulted in the smashing of local shops, assaults on the police, and shots from the crowd that killed an innocent bystander. In Mikhailov, Riazan Guberniia, a policeman smashed an accordion to halt the usual singing, dancing, and horseplay, setting off a siege of the police and zemstvo headquarters by a crowd of several thousand; the fray left one dead and several wounded. The rioters shouted that the police, not the *ratniki*, should be drafted. Officials blamed agitators for the slogan of drafting the police, but the culprits apprehended were all identified as peasants or discharged soldiers; the anger against the police in this case needed no prodding from the outside.⁴⁴

Still, the slogan to draft the police was prominent in all such incidents, and was occasionally coupled with evidence of political stimulus. In Petrograd five hundred conscripts from the Vasilevskii District being convoyed along Nevskii Prospect to the Nikolaevskii Station suddenly turned on the police crying, "Blood suckers! Pharaohs [popular slang for police]! Into the Army with you!" The police barricaded themselves behind an iron gate and fired revolver shots, wounding one of the crowd. In Rostov-on-the-Don (a major industrial center), a crowd of *ratniki* tried to bring out the workers and marched through the streets with a banner proclaiming, "Long live the Duma!" They resolved to refuse induction until it was recalled and the police were conscripted.⁴⁵ The

its prestige to an operation that was expected to encounter considerable opposition in the villages.

⁴⁴ For the official reports on these incidents, see *RDAF*, pp. 123-28.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 115, 116-18. The image of the Duma as championing the drafting of the police had a specific cause: on August 19 the Kadet deputy Shingarev gave an impassioned speech in the Duma supporting the law to draft the second-category *ratniki*, but in passing asked the government to seek other possible sources, for example, the exempted nationalities and the police. Doubtless the speech was widely reported in the press and became slightly distorted in transmission. On the probability of this, see Golovin, I, 96-97.

political mood in the country at this particular moment is excellently capsulized in a report by the governor of Astrakhan:

Events of recent days reported in newspaper articles have affected the mood of the population of Astrakhan, hitherto quite peaceful. Rumors and opinions are in circulation concerning the inappropriateness of the existing state structure and makeup of the government, of the heavy burden of guilt it carries for our lack of preparedness for the war and the current reverses suffered by our army. Finally, the dismissal of the State Duma, coinciding with the call-up of the second-category *ratniki*, has given impetus to long-accumulating dissatisfaction and has taken on the form of protest against the supposedly unbearable situation of the families of those called to the colors, which arises out of the unheard-of price increases of objects of prime necessity, and also resentment of the police because the *ratniki* are being called on to fight, but the police are not.⁴⁶

Undoubtedly, revolutionary groups tried to exploit the situation to make things more difficult for the government, but essentially the unrest was a spontaneous reaction to the call-up of the *ratniki*, and in most cases it assumed traditional forms, though occasionally the pro-Duma agitation of political groups became intermingled.

This upsurge of popular dissatisfaction passed as had others before it. The Duma dropped out of the picture for another year and the spectacle of ministerial leapfrog at the behest of Rasputin and the tsarina set in. The war had become a relentless Juggernaut against which any effort of human will seemed unavailing. In the course of 1916 the last leavings in the manpower barrel were scraped out: the remaining first-category *ratniki* under forty were called in April and September, as were the twenty-seven to thirty-seven age group of the second category (1,575,000 men in all). The last draft of 350,000 in the thirty-eight to forty age group of the second-category *ratniki*, plus 150,000 "over-forties" of the first category, represented a group of half a million disgruntled family men, *borodachi*, who rioted at induction centers, jumped off troop trains, balked at training exercises, and were universally regarded by military men as more a liability than an

⁴⁶ *RDAF*, p. 119.

asset.⁴⁷ What had been thought to be impossible was now a stark reality—the giant Russian “steamroller” was running out of fuel. The fact was so embarrassing that Stavka instructed the General Staff to draw up a bogus set of statistics for the benefit of Allied missions.⁴⁸



By the winter of 1915-1916 one could say that the wartime army had assumed its peculiar physiognomy, and the former peacetime army was left far behind. While it is true that persons of all social categories entered the Army, they did so in somewhat unequal ratios to their total numbers and in roles that to a large extent carried over social distinctions. The system of exemptions and favoritism predictably gave comfortable civilian berths to an appreciable number from the educated classes. Certain categories of skilled workers were also exempted—railroad and munitions workers, for example (some 600,000 workers)—but only a fraction of those needed for wartime production. By the time a new law on exemptions in critical sectors was passed (December 1915), the majority of the drafted workers had entered the casualty lists. Some 40,000 skilled workers were indeed recalled from the front, and, making use of tabulated data on war industries, it is possible to estimate that roughly another 600,000 were released from service by the new law.⁴⁹ Since the flower of the Russian proletariat had already perished on the fields of Poland and Galicia, the proletarian contingent in the Army is not likely to have been even 2 percent, or 180,000, at the most by the end of 1916 (the prewar figure was 3 to 3.5 percent). Considering that technical units required industrial skills and that some of them are said to have been composed primarily of workers (machine gunners, auto mechanics, chauffeurs, sappers, and communications specialists), it is not surprising that the front-line infantry units appear in the sources of 1917 as largely a peasant mass.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See Golovin, I, 81, and *RMVTs*, p. 17.

⁴⁸ According to an archival source cited in L. M. Gavrilov and V. V. Kutuzov, “Istochnie liudskikh rezervov russkoi armii v 1917 g.,” in the collection *Pervaia mirovaia voina 1914-1918* (Moscow, 1968), p. 150. The deception was intended for Gen. Knox, who, however, was not to be fooled and later obtained more accurate data.

⁴⁹ See Golovin, I, 112-17, esp. table on p. 113, and Tables 62 and 65 of *RMVTs*.

⁵⁰ A recent Soviet investigator, N. M. Iakupov (*Partiia bol'shevikov v*

Neither Soviet nor émigré scholarship has very much to say about the wartime officer class. The number of officers in the Army at the end of 1916, according to Kenez's figures, amounted to 145,916.⁵¹ The casualty figure for officers up to 1917 was about 92,500, with an additional 14,500 for 1917, which, allowing for 60,000 cadre and reserve officers in 1914 and a rough estimate for the recuperating wounded (40,000 or so), yields around 172,000 officers trained in wartime.⁵² The cadre element had practically disappeared below the level of captain, as the casualty rate for junior officers was phenomenal, while the remainder would have been promoted by 1916. Though military writers have not addressed themselves to the question of how many officers were trained, Peter Kenez had access to revealing archival data. In 1915 four-month courses in the professional military schools supplied 18,999 officers, and the educational requirement was dropped to six years of formal schooling.⁵³ A projection of these figures would be around 50,000 officers trained during the entire war, or slightly less than a third of all officers. Although efforts were made to maintain a desirable class composition in these schools, it is clear that there was a large influx of *raznochintsy*, especially from the educated professional classes and students. When V. B. Stankevich, a Trudovik littérateur-turned-patriot and an advocate by professional training, entered the elite Pavloskii Infantry School (the alma mater of aristocrats like P. N. Krasnov) in December 1914, he found his comrades to be "all yesterday's students and advocate's assistants, in a word, raw youth."⁵⁴ Although the trainees graduated as *praporshchiki*, it is clear that many, if not most,

bor'be za vlast' sovetov v period dvoevlastiia [Kiev, 1972], pp. 43-44), considerably scales down the exaggerated estimates of mobilized workers in earlier Soviet works, fixing it at 400,000 for the duration of the war, or 2.8% of the total mobilized, but he does not take into consideration the additional factors mentioned here, which diminish even this reasonable estimate. For the prewar figure, see G. L. Sobolev, "Petrgradskii garnizon v 1917 g.," *IZ*, LXXXVIII (1971), 78 (from a War Ministry study of 1913).

⁵¹ Op. cit., p. 145.

⁵² Using Golovin's more plausible estimates (I, 160), rather than *RMVTs* (Table 23, p. 31), one arrives at the same figures as Kenez, but it is not clear whether his figures reckon with returning wounded. Included in the figure given here is an estimate of an additional 20,000 officers trained in 1917.

⁵³ Op. cit., p. 147.

⁵⁴ Op. cit., p. 25.

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were quickly promoted to lieutenant (*poruchik*) and could count on further advancement.

The remaining deficit was made up by new schools for *praporshchiki*. Numbering some thirty-four hastily constructed institutions in the military districts and turning out twice as many products as the professional schools, they were simply a wartime expedient to fill up the perpetually draining ranks of this lowest grade of officer. The only entrance requirement was four years of formal education and four months of active service. Kenez's most striking data pertain to the social background of this group. In examining a sample of 488 trainees from the files of five schools in three different military districts for the period 1914-1917, he found that by far the greatest number were from the lower orders:

Nobles	27 (5.5%)	Clergy	14 (2.8%)
Honored		<i>Meshchantsvo</i>	134 (27.5%)
citizens	19 (3.8%)	Peasants	285 (58.4%)
Merchants	2 (0.4%)	Cossacks	7 (1.4%)

Only a small fraction (thirteen in Kenez's sample) had had more than six years of formal education, and nearly all of them were of the twenty to twenty-five age group.⁵⁵ The chief conclusion here is negative: the great majority of the *praporshchiki* who figure as radical elements in 1917 were not intellectuals in uniform with prior political commitments, but rather the more literate shoots from the *narod*, that is, the skilled workers, rural and urban, the more prosperous peasantry, or, like Oskin, simply the best products of the village schools. One can assume that they were recruited from promising elements in the ranks at the front upon the recommendation of their officers. They were susceptible to radicalization in 1917 primarily because they were literate—and socially disoriented. Doubtless they had frequently suffered humiliations from superior officers; unlike the true uniformed intellectuals from the professional military schools, they could not count on promotion; and finally, they could not but be aware that they were primarily wartime cannon fodder. Kenez very appropriately characterizes the *praporshchiki* schools as a revival of the prereform junker system, and indeed, in social type and status, their products were but a slight cut above the NCOs.

There should have been no difficulty in augmenting the ranks

⁵⁵ Op. cit., p. 147.

of the officers with better-educated types. Theoretically, 1,200,000 persons of the educated and propertied classes were liable for military service.⁵⁶ Officer and classified ranks account for not more than 220,000 of these, and, even making the most generous estimates for those with legitimate exemptions for vital wartime services (which would include 64,000 government officials, 3,700 bank clerks, 172,000 railroad and communications personnel, 5,320 zemstvo and city Duma officials, and an unknown number of schoolteachers and employees of the War Industries Committees), it still leaves one to wonder where better than half a million strapping sons of the bourgeoisie and gentry laid their heads.⁵⁷ The volume of complaints against the *belobiletniki* (holders of special exemptions) was such that their number cannot be regarded as negligible, and although the total number is not recorded, reviews of these exemptions, which were expected to uncover some 600,000 shirkers, actually yielded only 100,000 in 1916 and another 100,000 after the February Revolution. It can be surmised that a large share of these elusive *belobiletniki*, possibly as many as 200,000, nested in the swollen "public organizations"—the Red Cross, the Zemgor organizations, and the War Industries Committees.⁵⁸ There are no more despised figures in the literature than the *zengussars*, the healthy, youthful employees of the public organizations who swarmed the rear areas of the front, sporting pseudo-military uniforms, making love with female counterparts, and stumbling over one another in the busy

⁵⁶ According to statistician V. S. Nemchinov (in the collection *Vsemirnoe znachenie Velikoi Oktiabrskoi sotsialisticheskoi Revoliutsii* [Moscow, 1957], p. 65), 7.1% of the population of the Russian Empire in 1913 belonged to these classes. Of the 150,000,000 that were in the population groups that were militarily liable, 11.2% were mobilized, which, if applied to the educated and propertied classes, yields the 1,200,000.

⁵⁷ Jews and sectarians, who by law could not be commissioned, nevertheless could and frequently did serve as doctors, veterinarians, or in other "classified" but noncommissioned ranks of rear staffs. A fair number with the least education might serve in the more lowly "unclassified" services (as clerks, supply personnel, field medics), which required at least literacy.

⁵⁸ See Golovin, I, 99, 113, and *RMVTs*, Tables 12-14, pp. 24-25. No less than 334,000 persons staffed the front organizations of Zemgor (the Union of Zemstvos and Towns, which was allowed to provide auxiliary medical, petty supply, and sanitation services) and the Red Cross, and 270,000 are recorded for "beneficent organizations" for the Northern and Western fronts alone. The figure on 600,000 shirkers was estimated by M. V. Rodzianko in a report to the tsar on behalf of the Special Conference on Defense in late 1916 (Golovin, I, 99).

work of medical and delousing facilities, refugee evacuation centers, and backup supply services.⁵⁹ But lest one think that this dodge always sheltered chronic shirkers from the grim side of war, one should read the memoirs of Konstantin Paustovskii, who worked endless hours and days within a hospital car, assisting surgeons in the removal of arms and legs.⁶⁰

One should not forget that almost 45 percent of the population of the tsarist empire was composed of nationalities other than Great Russian and that nearly all were present in the ranks, though in numbers not necessarily reflecting the population at large. The inhabitants of Finland and most tribal peoples of the Caucasus, Central Asia, and Siberia were by law exempt from military duty altogether, and the Cossacks came under a special conscription law. Volunteer units were formed in the course of the war from exempted nationalities, and the statutes affecting others were altered, so that one does encounter formations composed exclusively of tribesmen, the most famous of which were the two Caucasus "Wild Divisions," which appear in the revolutionary chronicles. Ukrainians and White Russians constituted the largest single bloc of nationality groups, and, if mobilized in proportion to their population ratios, would have amounted to 23 and 8 percent of the total, respectively, or 3,500,000 and 1,200,000. Although Ukrainians were visibly present in many units on all fronts, they were mobilized primarily in the Kiev and Odessa military districts, which fed into the Southwestern Front and, in 1917, into the Rumanian Front.⁶¹ Although there are no official figures, various sources claim a mobilization total of 600,000 to 650,000 Poles, 400,000 Jews, and 100,000 Estonians.⁶² Estimates based on popu-

⁵⁹ For a biting characterization, see N. Lugin (Fedor Stepun), *Iz pisem praporshchika-artillerista* (Moscow, 1918), pp. 157-59, who estimates their numbers at three times that required for essential services. He even holds them responsible for the spread of venereal disease to "healthy officers."

⁶⁰ *The Story of a Life* (New York, 1967), p. 291ff.

⁶¹ Iakupov (p. 47) states that the mix in these districts was 46% Great Russian, 30% Ukrainian, and 30% other, which seems consistent with firsthand accounts. In mid-1917 the Ukrainianization of military units on these fronts was the equivalent of Bolshevization in its disorganizing manifestations, and it will receive attention in the second volume of this work.

⁶² See *Pervaiia mirovaia voina*, pp. 158, 170, for the Poles and Estonians, and *McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union*, ed. Michael Florinsky (New York, Toronto, and London, 1961), p. 257, for the Jews.

lation statistics, with certain allowances for occupied territories, would yield 180,000 Latvians, 250,000 Lithuanians, 120,000 Armenians, 350,000 Georgians, and 350,000 Azerbaidzhanians. In response to incessant petitions by enterprising nationalist politicians, there were two special Latvian brigades, totaling close to 40,000, and a single Polish division before 1917. These formations succumbed to Bolshevik influence in 1917 and were the Bolsheviks' most dependable armed force on the Northern and Western fronts, respectively, in October 1917.⁶³ For the most part the tsarist government resisted such projects and followed a policy of planned dispersal of nationality groups. When not otherwise illuminated by the sources, the safest assumption is that anywhere up to 15 or 20 percent of a given regiment or division consisted of minor nationalities (exclusive of Ukrainians and White Russians), who ordinarily did not register their presence. The educated and assimilated elements could and often did serve in the officer ranks (except Jews, of course), as is confirmed by the variety of names one encounters in the sources, but the foot soldiers were largely uneducated peasants and tribesmen who spoke little if any Russian and seldom asserted themselves in the revolutionary era until the very end.

One final distribution must be kept in mind, namely, that between front and rear, and between various types of units. The documentary record on 1917 is weighted heavily in favor of front-line infantry units, and yet somewhere between a half and two-thirds of the 7,000,000 men under arms were either not currently attached to the various fronts or were staffing rear services and institutions that did not perform front-line duty. The various figures and estimates for agglomerations in the rear use conflicting criteria and are very difficult to reconcile. Estimates of the garrison troops in cities of the interior that were attached to the military districts run as high as 2,500,000, but 2,000,000 is probably a more accurate figure (some estimates, including those of Golovin, overlook that many large garrisons came under the authority

⁶³ See Iakupov, pp. 46-47, for estimates on Moldavians, Chuvashes, and Tatars, which, however, appear to be out of proportion to population statistics (working with the same 11.2% norm for mobilized) and therefore subject to question. On the Polish divisions, see I. I. Beliakevich, "Iz istorii sozdaniia pol'skikh formirovani," in *Pervaia mirovaia voina*, pp. 158-69; on the Latvian brigades, the best of the many works is Ia. Khaimin, *Latyshskie strelki v bor'be za pobedu Oktiabrskoi revoliutsii* (Riga, 1961).

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of front commanders and are redundant with figures for the "active army").⁶⁴ Around 157,000 men (or less than 10 percent of the total) were on the permanent staffs of military institutions in the interior. The balance would be recruits in training, officer, NCO, and technical training units, and recuperating sick and wounded. Attached to the fronts but not performing front-line duty were work battalions on roads, railroads, and fortifications, and patrol and guard units for military facilities, fortress garrisons, etc.⁶⁵ Still to be reckoned are the many technical units attached to rear headquarters: automotive maintenance, communications, artillery parks, gun repair units, and doubtless many others. Even Stavka did not possess an accurate head count, but Golovin claims that General Alekseev reckoned the fighting strength at 35 percent of the field army, as opposed to 65 percent for support services, whereas General Gurko exactly reversed these percentages.⁶⁶ In any event, the size of the support services in the Russian Army was enormous, far greater according to all authorities than those of other belligerent armies, owing to the enormous distances and the backwardness of transport and auxiliary services.



In the fall of 1916 the Russian Army faced its third winter of the war and all the attendant hardships. Despite the Brusilov offensive, no decisive victory or strategic objective had been at-

⁶⁴ See Golovin, I, pp. 194-95, and Table 19 of *RMVTs*, p. 29. Golovin seems to add on estimates that are redundant with the groups subsumed under the figures in the table and reaches a total of 2,500,000 for December 1916. According to data cited by Iakupov (p. 42), 80 out of 305 reserve regiments were garrisoned in the region of the front and were therefore included in the figures for the field army; thus, possibly 472,000 troops still under training would not be included under the rubric of the rear garrisons.

⁶⁵ Iakupov (p. 38) gives figures for 38 work battalions and 24 militia brigades, possibly 200,000 men in all. There were also the personnel of 450 hospital trains, 210 transport battalions, 475 permanent hospitals, 519 movable field hospitals, 210 evacuation hospitals, and similar rear services. Public organizations supplied most of the personnel for these units, but large numbers of regular soldiers were attached to them as well.

⁶⁶ See Golovin, I, 186-87, who cites Gurko. Golovin himself estimates a ratio of 75:25 for fighting strength to rear services at the beginning of the war, but 50:50 by 1917. Thus there were never more than 3,500,000 soldiers on the firing line at any given time, although in December 1916 the strength of the field army was reckoned at 6,960,000.

tained, and the effort had cost more than a million casualties.⁶⁷ The entry of Rumania into the war on the side of the Allies in August complicated rather than improved the strategic situation. Instead of continuing to exert pressure on sectors where they had already achieved limited success, the Russians were obliged to carry out extensive regrouping operations to shore up the faltering Rumanian Army and to cover 350 additional miles of front facing both Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria (three armies, the Ninth, the Fourth, and the Sixth, had to be deployed hundreds of miles to the south); besides the strain on the already overtaxed railway system, this new effort entailed forced marches of some units over the Carpathians under bitter winter conditions.⁶⁸

The major shortcomings were no longer in munitions, weapons, and supplies, which had largely been made up by increased domestic production and orders from abroad; in addition, the Zemgor organizations had made enormous strides in setting up field hospitals and baths and in distributing medicines, bandages, boots, soap, and other necessities. Nevertheless, as if oblivious to all this, the Russian Army suffered a new crisis in morale in late 1916, surpassing that of the Great Retreat. It was rooted fundamentally in the feeling of utter despair that the slaughter would ever end and that anything resembling victory could be achieved. The foot soldiers in the trenches knew that the gains of the Brusilov offensive were paid for with a frightening expenditure of blood and that long after the major operations were over the casualties continued to mount with the incessant artillery pounding, gas attacks, and sudden thrusts of the German reinforcements that had been transferred from the Western Front. The replacements were the hastily assembled and badly trained peasant youths and over-forty *ratniki* who bitterly resented being torn away from their families and plots. The new officers recruited from previously deferred students and *raznochintsy* for the most part identified with the Allied cause, but they were also susceptible to political ideas and

⁶⁷ See Kersnovskii, iv, 772ff., A. M. Zaionchkovskii, *Strategicheskii ocherk voyny 1914-1918 g.g.*, 7 vols. (Moscow, 1923), Vol. vi, *Period ot proryva iugazapadnogo fronta v mae 1916 g. do kontsa goda*, and many personal accounts. For the casualty figures, see Golovin, i, 156-57, who puts the dead and wounded for the entire campaign (May-October) at 1,200,000 and captured at 212,000, a rate of 235,000 per month (estimates at the time, even official ones, were from 300,000 to 350,000 per month).

⁶⁸ See Kersnovskii, iv, 827ff., and F. I. Vasilev and A. S. Kazakov, *Strategicheskii ocherk voyny. Rumynskii front* (Moscow, 1922), pp. 102-10.

negatively disposed toward the tsarist government; a fair number had been involved in student revolutionary and political organizations, and many more were at least conversant with the politics of the Duma and progressive circles. Thus a very unreliable element, from the government point of view, was being brought into contact with soldiers in the trenches. However, these newly fabricated officers were very ill at ease in their new role and commanded little respect from their men. They were unaccustomed to exerting the traditional forms of discipline (the liberal use of fists and "putting under arms"), and yet they had no other way to enforce their authority. Sergeants and products of the *praporshchik* schools were accustomed to fists and "putting under arms," but in mood and social origin they were more attuned to the soldier masses. The replacements infected the front-line troops with their laxer discipline and civilian concerns, while the latter soon communicated their battle traumas and utter despair to replacements. This amalgam was a deadly combination, seriously undermining the Army's fighting capacity and vastly increasing the danger in the eventuality of a political crisis.

There is ample evidence on the mood and morale of the front on the eve of the Revolution, including a fair sample of soldiers' letters, as well as many systematic reports of censorship authorities, of intelligence officials, and of officers to their superiors. In sum total, they give a consistent and reliable picture (one censor's report, for example, was based on the examination of over 10,000 letters from the II Siberian Army Corps for the first two weeks of February).⁶⁹ The overriding theme of both the letters and the reports is the overwhelming desire for peace regardless of the consequences. The question "When is it going to end?" and the complaint of being "fed up with the war" recur with unvarying consistency. In the last weeks of 1916 rumors of an impending peace were particularly rife, stimulated by reports of the kaiser's peace proposal of December 12. One letter declared: "Persistent rumors have begun to circulate among the soldiers that peace will come soon. It's about time, as we're terribly sick and tired of the whole thing."⁷⁰ To put an end to such talk a proclamation was put out

⁶⁹ *RDAF*, pp. 291-96.

⁷⁰ O. A. Chaadaeva, "Soldatskie pis'ma v gody mirovoi voyny," *KA*, LXV-LXVI (1934), 141. Compare the comment of the Petrograd Military Censorship Commission, based on a survey of such letters for the period October 15 to November 1, 1916: "The onset of cold weather, the consciousness

by Stavka in the tsar's name to the effect that no peace was possible until the enemy had been driven from Russian soil and the noble aims of the Allied cause had been achieved. One soldier wrote to a comrade in the rear: "They've put out an order that there will be no peace until full victory. And you know how badly they feed us—only beans for dinner and supper. Tell your comrades that we all ought to stage an uprising against the war."⁷¹

Two other issues were very much on the soldiers' minds in these months: the deterioration in the quality and quantity of their food, and the wild inflation that was imposing such hardships on their families. Although the roots of the food crisis, which reached a peak in December and January, cannot be traced here, it hit the front with just as great a force as it did the rear. Bread rations were cut from the normal three pounds a day to two, then one pound, and sometimes it was entirely replaced by other products or cash handouts, which in the absence of supply was utterly meaningless. One common substitute was lentils (*chechevitsa*), which the soldiers despised so thoroughly that it can almost be accounted as a major cause of the Revolution. The impact of the food situation was uneven on different sectors of the front, and even among different units of the same front, as it was caused as much by bottlenecks in transport and the venality or inefficiency of commissary officers as it was by overall shortages. One censor noted that the soldiers were aware that some units were fed better than others and blamed their superior officers. Better-supplied artillery units sometimes sold bread to infantrymen at extortionate prices.⁷² The refrain was unrelenting in letter after letter: "The G.I. grub is worse than garbage, you could die of hunger." "The food is so bad it makes the horses sick." "All you get anymore is peas with water, and, oh yes, *chechevitsa*." "They feed us worse than dogs." By February 1917 they evinced a genuine fear of starvation: "There is no more bread, nothing to eat." "We sit here for days

that the war again will drag on for an indefinite time, and above all, alarming rumors emanating from the rear are depressing morale in the Army and are increasing despair and the feeling of hopelessness, and in connection with this, one hears more and more often of the desire for the speediest possible end to the war." *RDAF*, p. 232.

⁷¹ *RDAF*, p. 261. The unsigned letter dates to January 1917 and was intercepted for its expression of "revolutionary" sentiments. It is referred to in a censor's survey of the XLII Corps, *ibid.*, p. 297.

⁷² Staff report of the II Siberian Corps (Northern Front), Feb. 15, 1917, *ibid.*, p. 295.

on end without bread." "Cold and hunger, nothing but deprivation!" "I'd rather be killed than starve like a dog."⁷³

The news from home was not likely to cheer the soldiers at all. Each letter complained of skyrocketing prices, shortages, long queues, and shrinking wages. The censorship did its best to cut down this flow of depressing news, but it could do nothing about the wild stories brought in by replacements and soldiers returning from leave. A censor's report of October 18, 1916, covering the Sixth Army observed that recent correspondence displayed "an extremely acute and threatening universal dissatisfaction with rising prices and the impunity enjoyed by speculators," which persuaded many soldiers that (in the censor's words) "after the war we'll have to settle accounts with the internal enemy."⁷⁴ One letter blamed the inflation directly on the war, which "fattens the rich and ruins the poor both physically and materially."⁷⁵ In another, an officer claimed that his soldiers frequently expressed the opinion that "the war is a matter of the hands and heads of clever people who hold power for selfish aims," a sentiment echoed by a soldier who wrote that "the *pomeshchiki* started the war to wipe out the *muzhiks* and to keep them from taking over *pomeshchik* land."⁷⁶ Thus class feeling tended to shape the trench soldiers' views of their bitter fate, and they were prone to put their wildest fantasy to work to magnify the evil.

⁷³ Excerpted from *ibid.*, pp. 323, 294, 295, *KA*, LXV-LXVI, 156, and "V kontse 1916 g.," *By*, IX (1918), 150 (police report). All are direct citations from soldiers' letters.

⁷⁴ *RDAF*, p. 209. On censors' deletions, see A. P. Steklov, *Revoliutsionnaia deiatel'nost' bol'shevistskikh organizatsii na kavkazskom fronte 1914-1917 gg.* (Tbilisi, 1969), p. 29. F. A. Shurygin, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie soldatskikh mass severnogo fronta v 1917 godu* (Moscow, 1958), pp. 13-14, claims that the military censorship of the Twelfth Army destroyed 8,813 letters for harmful content in a two-week period, and that there was a standing order to that effect for all armies. (In the archive of the Grenadier Corps [f. 2327, op. iv, d. 1, l. 109] there is a copy of a censor's report for the Second Army [Western Front] for February 1917. Based on the examination of 170,100 letters to and from the front, it emphasizes the depressed mood bordering on despair of the home front, owing to requisitions, soldiers' wives being forced to sell off livestock, and inflation. Of the total, 9,262 from the front and 9,143 to the front, including all that were written in German or Yiddish, were destroyed, and 5,972 from and 7,253 to the front were let through with the red pencil; 34,152 [20%] were characterized as "cheerful," and 2,275 from and 5,756 to the front [a total of 8,031, or 4.7%] as "depressed.")

⁷⁵ *KA*, LXV-LXVI, 142.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 158-59.

It would be an oversimplification, of course, to ascribe the upheaval of 1917 to war weariness and the hardships of trench and civilian life. The hardy peasant-soldiers had already proven in the disastrous campaigns of 1915 how much in the way of deprivation and bloodshed they were able to endure without reaching for revolutionary solutions. The dangerous new element was the interaction of the mood of the front with the deteriorating political situation in the rear. It would be a gross misconception to view the simple soldier as totally removed from politics. As we have seen, during the Great Retreat the affairs of Miasoedov and Sukhomlinov confirmed the suspicion of treason in high places, which was soon extended by rumor to other generals and officials, particularly those with German names. The Duma was variously seen as fighting treason and corruption in the rear, or as equally responsible. Occasionally evidence of revolutionary propaganda appears, sometimes at the front, but more frequently in the urban centers, hospitals, and redistribution centers. Though difficult to measure, its overall impact was probably not very great, and at best it only gave currency to expressions (such as "burzhuis") that formulated thoughts already well developed and entrenched.⁷⁷

Much more certain is that the public alarm over the Rasputin scandal and the succession of totally incompetent ministers, which increased sharply after Miliukov's speech to the Duma of November 1, 1916 ("Is this folly, or is this treason?"), now penetrated

⁷⁷ A number of the revolutionary leaflets and military reports collected in *RDRA* contain allusions to revolutionary persons or propaganda, but they do not suggest broad influence, nor is there, to the author's knowledge, a serious investigation of the subject, and thus it will not be explored here. For a few examples, see *ibid.*, pp. 230 (revolutionary leaflets brought back by soldiers on leave), 235 (socialist literature found on a *praporshchik* in a reserve unit), and "Revoliutsonnaia propaganda v armii v 1916-1917 gg.," *KA*, xvii (1926), 36-50. The latter was a typical tempest in a teacup: the Department of Police turned up an anonymous leaflet that in fact seemed *not* to be directed at the front and that laid down a program of revolutionary action for *after* the war. Moreover, it was written for the consumption of sophisticated revolutionaries and would not have been understood by the average soldier. Nevertheless, War Minister Beliaev sent a copy to Stavka, recommending that such criminal propaganda be "nipped in the bud." Chief of Staff Klembovskii passed it along to front commanders, suggesting elaborate measures of security and counterpropaganda. Northern Front Commander Gen. Ruzskii soberly replied that the suggestions were totally superfluous, as the real causes of the unrest among the troops were inflation and disorder in the rear, and not enough bread and too much *chechevitsa* at the front.

the officer corps at every level, from the high command down to the lowly *praporshchiki*. There was a widespread conviction that Rasputin was the tool of German espionage, that his hand-picked ministers, such as Khvostov, Stuermer, and Protopopov, were outright traitors who were bent on a dishonorable, separate peace with Germany, even that the tsarina harbored German sympathies and protected these "dark forces" through her influence on her husband. Even persons of pronounced right-wing and monarchial convictions were drawing the conclusion that unless the Rasputin clique were removed and "men of public confidence" installed in their place, Russia would face the shame and disaster of defeat. Indeed, since the tsar persisted in submitting to his spouse's influence, they were now willing to contemplate his removal by force. Among the higher officers, particularly of the General Staff, the possibility of a coup was frequently discussed, sometimes quite openly, not to speak of actual plots to which a number of highly placed generals and admirals were privy.⁷⁸

These sentiments are well documented in an Okhrana memorandum drawn up for the Council of Ministers, based on the reports of surveillance organs on the Northern and Western fronts. It acknowledges the broad support, even in the high command, for the Duma and the idea of a responsible ministry, and expresses the fear that should the Duma be dissolved, even moderate circles in the Army would support the idea of a coup d'état. It notes that hostility is centered on the tsarina, who is blamed for protecting the pro-German elements. Considerable space is given to current rumors and anecdotes reflecting the frame of mind of the officers—that former Commander in Chief Grand Duke Nicholas refused to report to the tsar in the presence of Minister of the Court Count Fredericks (actually a Swede, not a German), that the grand duke had Rasputin beaten when he showed up at Stavka, that the tsarina and the Grand Duchess Elizabeth showed more sympathy to captured enemy wounded than to Russian wounded, and that the tsar had reluctantly given his consent to Rasputin's murder. This and other reports note how eagerly officers now fol-

⁷⁸ On military plots, which revolved chiefly around Guchkov and Gen. Krymov, see S. P. Melgunov, *Na putiakh k dvortsovomu perevorotu* (Paris, 1940). The theme is marginal to the present study, but for a budding plot in the naval command and dramatic documents, see "Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia v Baltiiskom Flote," *KA*, xxxii (1929), 88-124 (diary of Capt. I. I. Rengarten and protocol of discussions of the political situation).

lowed events in the newspapers, particularly the activities of the Duma, even sending couriers for miles to the nearest railroad station or bringing back large stacks from leave.⁷⁹ A report of the chief of counterintelligence at Dvinsk, dated February 15, notes widespread indignation against Stuermer, Protopopov, and the domestic policies of the government, and declares that "such a mood is characteristic, not only of a considerable section of the civilian population, but prevails among all ranks in the army, as reflected in letters held up by the military censor."⁸⁰

An incident related by Fedor Stepun illustrates the officers' new openness to politics, even in the presence of commanding officers. His battery invited officers of the division to a New Year's celebration in their bunker; fifteen in all were present. Still relatively sober, a junior officer unexpectedly proposed a toast: "Gentlemen, I give you free Russia!" The ice broken, a lively "political" discussion ensued, during which a younger officer of the radical student type proposed sending a telegram to Rodzi-anko, which forthwith was drawn up (Stepun and two others working out the text):

We, officers of the First Division . . . in this difficult hour for the fatherland, uniting army and people, send you as Chairman of the State Duma, representing all Russia, our greetings. Ready to fulfill our duty at the front to the end, we expect from the State Duma in this decisive hour that it shall *actively place itself at the head of all live forces of Russia* to work inside the country for that structure and those principles without which all our efforts will be in vain.⁸¹

The question of whether or not to sign occasioned a heated exchange, in the course of which the radical student accused the colonel of cowardice, since he conceded that he agreed with it in principle. This discouraged the others from signing, but it is

⁷⁹ See "Russkaia armiia nakanune revoliutsii," *By*, xxix (1918), 151-57. The report is undated and unsigned.

⁸⁰ *RDRA*, p. 290.

⁸¹ *Iz pisem praporshchika-artillerista*, p. 162; a parallel but less complete account is in Stepun's *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia*, I, 393-95. G. N. Chemodanov records a similar talkativeness among the officers of his battered infantry unit on the Northern Front. Several of his colleagues favored the idea of a political revolution, others, the Kadet view of the "danger" of a revolution in wartime; only two cadre types would hear nothing of politics. *Poslednye dni staroi armii* (Moscow, 1926), pp. 66-71.

significant that the commanding officer did nothing to restrain the young enthusiasts, even though the message clearly invited the Duma to embark on revolutionary action.

Once internal politics became a major preoccupation of the officers, it inevitably found an echo in the trenches. Soldiers, looking for explanations of their own anxieties, carefully listened to their officers' discussions (with the close quarters and orderlies and messengers always about, what was said in the officers' bunkers could not remain a secret) and sometimes even plied them with questions. Sometimes, too, they obtained newspapers, and in any event, replacements and those returning from leaves and hospitals brought with them the current civilian gossip. The Okhrana report mentioned above observes that officers in the trenches "discuss the most delicate [political] questions" with their men and "communicate to them their own mood." The ordinary soldier, it claimed, has also become convinced of the "German stranglehold," the treason of government figures, and the German sympathies of the tsarina. Moreover, "the most sordid insinuations" are attached to Rasputin's relations with the tsarina and her female entourage, all of which lead the soldiers to conclude, "What's the use of fighting if the Germans have already taken over?"⁸² Soldiers were not likely to express overtly in their letters what was on their mind—incautious references could lead to harsh disciplinary measures—but occasionally they could not contain themselves, as in the case of a soldier in the 14th Siberian Rifle Regiment:

It's a disgrace that we have to suffer a third year for God knows what. . . . Are we to blame that the government acquired enemies by letting in German colonists? The German is now ruling our country. The Russian peasant has no way of getting anything, neither education nor a free life. He has been given only one right—to go begging in Christ's name, and now they make him defend not the fatherland but the landowning "barons."⁸³

The commentary of surveillance officials established that such sentiments were fed by the rapidly deteriorating economic condition of the country:

⁸² *By*, xxix, 155.

⁸³ *RDAF*, p. 293. This was one of the 15 letters, out of 10,000 examined, that were sent to the staff of the Twelfth Army for possible prosecution.

It is impossible not to notice in the letters both to and from the army the increasingly sharp manifestations of dissatisfaction with the internal political situation in connection with the general disorganization of the home front and the ever increasing prices of objects of prime necessity. Rumors are reaching the army of disorders, strikes at the factories, disturbances in rear military units, etc., and these rumors, often exaggerated and dressed up, evoke a sinking morale in the troops and extreme anxiety concerning their families.

The same report observes that 40 percent of the letters from home contain references to strikes and that "recently rumors have so increased that soldiers in the rear are joining the workers or are demonstrating their dissatisfactions on their own."⁸⁴

An incident providing considerable grist for the rumor mill was a disturbance in Kremenchug, a collection and distribution point for soldiers returning to the front, captured deserters, and soldiers disciplined for various offenses, which was overflowing beyond its normal capacity of five thousand. Unruly elements broke out of the barracks, and soon the streets were filled with drunken, riotous soldiers. The disorders lasted two days, during which time the guardhouses were emptied, stores were plundered, and two were killed and five wounded in random shooting. The grievances articulated were the usual ones—hard bunks, no boots, "Why don't they ship out the police?"—but the alarming aspect was that units brought out to quell the riot refused to obey the command to shoot. Earlier in the war similar incidents had attracted little attention, but in the versions circulating at the front, a regular battle had taken place at Kremenchug, sixty policemen had been killed, Cossacks had joined the rioters, all buildings had been burned to the ground, and workers had been locked

⁸⁴ Report of the Central Military Censorship Commission, Nov. 27, 1916, *RDAF*, p. 233. Compare the assessment in the Okhrana report of October 1916: "The close relations of soldiers with Petrograd workers shows that the mood in the Army is very, very restless, not to say revolutionary; the inflation and the shortages are hitting the soldiers' wives very hard and are well known in the Army by the soldiers themselves who come home on leave. The rumors circulating at the front about starvation in Petrograd have reached unheard-of proportions, bordering on pure fantasy—that bread costs a ruble a pound, that only nobles and landowners get meat, that a new cemetery has been opened up to take care of those dying of starvation, etc. The unrest is . . . compounded by the propaganda of revolutionaries and the Germans" (*KA*, xvii, 12).

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up in their factories to keep them from joining the soldiers. Moreover, the outburst was linked to other rumored incidents in Moscow, Kharkov, and Odessa and interpreted as a general protest against the war.⁸⁵



In spite of these signs of restiveness and anxiety, most units at the front held their peace and carried out their routine duties. The average soldier was still unwilling to risk the severe penalties for overt rebellion, and he was more likely to resort to self-wounding, voluntary capture, foot dragging, or desertion to the rear. Still, in the fall of 1916 a rash of mutinies of major magnitude (of which a dozen or so can be verified) involved entire regiments.⁸⁶ (If such incidents occurred earlier in the war, no record has been left of them.) In each case it was a question of the collective refusal to execute orders to attack or to regroup preparatory to an attack. The junior officers who ordered their men out would typically be answered by shouts in the dark or from the rear ranks: "We won't go!" "We'll hold the front, but we won't attack!" "Anyone who moves will get shot!" "Give us boots and warm clothing first!" The trouble usually started in one company and spread to others by threats to shoot if they moved. Mere rumors that a neighboring unit refused to move aroused the fear of an exposed flank and could immobilize an entire regiment. In about half of the cases only a few companies were seriously infected and were quickly pacified, with or without courts-martial and executions (usually with). The grounds cited were usually battleweariness, the suicidal nature of the attack (an exposed

⁸⁵ See the detailed report of the chief of the Poltava Gendarme Administration, Nov. 4, 1916, which is quite accurate, in *RDAF*, p. 221, and the fantastic versions of it picked up in censors' reports and intercepted letters (*ibid.*, pp. 234, 287-88, and *KA*, LXV-LXVI, 144-46).

⁸⁶ About eight instances are identifiable in *RDAF*, pp. 204-7, 247, 283-84, and ten more (no overlap) in German intelligence documents in F. G. Gemmp, *Geheimer Nachrichtendienst und Spionage des Heeres*, Anschnitt 9: Mobile Abteilung III-b beim Chef des Generalstabes des Feldheeres im Jahre 1917, VII. Ostfront, 1. Der Zustand des russischen und rumänischen Heeres Anfang 1917, Anlage 13: Meldungen (irregular pagination, on microfilm at HI). Three or four more are mentioned in personal accounts, which may or may not be redundant with the above. They occurred on every front and in at least 8 of the 14 armies between October 1 and December 30, 1916, the heaviest concentration being in the Special Army in October and the Twelfth Army during the abortive Christmas offensive.

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position, failure of the artillery to destroy the wire and first line of enemy trenches), or sometimes disgust with the war in general, but more often the sources are too fragmentary to establish the cause.⁸⁷

Though the circumstances surrounding these affairs usually remain obscure, in three of them it is possible to detect clear evidence of preliminary agitation or premeditated, concerted action aimed at halting the entire regiment or division. In the case of the 22nd Infantry Division, two regiments blocked the path of a third being moved up for an attack and threatened to shoot. It turned out that a letter had been circulating, urging soldiers of the division not to take part in the proposed attack, and agitators from the neighboring 20th Division were blamed. Earlier in the year the latter had been stationed near Riga and had shown signs of infection from revolutionary propaganda. Although the incident was quickly cut off, it so upset General Brusilov that he complained to Stavka that nests of propaganda on other fronts were spoiling his troops, which had a hitherto unblemished record.⁸⁸ A second major mutiny occurred in the 17th Rifle Regiment of the 20th Siberian Rifle Division during a major action near Mitau, Latvia, on December 23, 1916. An anonymous letter warned the commanding officer that the regiment would not take part in the attack, and similar letters were received by platoon commanders. Agitators from one battalion went from one unit to another urging them to join in. As a result, the regiment was taken from the front line at the very last minute and replaced by another. The major theme of this agitation was treason in the high command. The corps commander, who personally interviewed the rebels, was greeted with cries from the rear ranks:

⁸⁷ Compare the following letter, not known to be related to any of the incidents noted above: "We were in battle for nine days and the Germans gave us a good licking, knocking out a third of the regiment and leaving only 30 men per company, and now again they want us to push the Germans out of their trenches; and we agreed, but two of us were shell-shocked and went to the dressing station. There the colonel and the priest took them and beat them with 25 strokes of the rod and sent them back to the front line. When we saw that, we blew up and screamed, 'Send us the priest, the colonel, and the doctor, and then we'll fight!' We sent a telegram to the tsar, telling him to take us and shoot us, but we won't fight anymore." *KA*, LXV-LXVI, 144.

⁸⁸ *RDAF*, pp. 205-6, 212-13 (report of the corps commander of Oct. 19 and Brusilov's letter to Stavka of Oct. 22).

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“The commanders are all traitors. They sold Poland. Why was Grand Duke Nicholas dismissed? Get rid of the internal German first. How can we fight when Riga is full of spies? The tsar has surrounded himself with Germans and is destroying Russia!’”⁸⁹ Germanomania was prominent in all of the agitation that came to light in this affair (the names of Stuermer, Fredericks, and Sukhomlinov abound), which makes it unlikely that the source of the agitation was enemy or revolutionary propaganda. Rather, it was one more reflection of popular psychology, which a few enterprising agitators hoped to turn into a campaign to end the war.

The mutiny of the 223rd Odoevskii Regiment (56th Infantry Division, Special Army, Southwestern Front) is more prosaic than the others, but extensive documentation is available.⁹⁰ The regiment was to replace another of the division on the front line, but at the specified time several companies refused to move, and in the semidarkness (the bivouac was in a wooded area) it was an easy matter to bring the other companies to a halt with shouts and firing into the air. The soldiers were courteous to their officers and disciplined in all other respects, but firmly refused to budge. The dramatic attempt of the elderly colonel to head up the column carrying the regimental banner, which he dramatically pressed to his lips, and followed by the regimental band ended in fiasco. The mutiny persisted into the following day, the divisional commander having no better luck than his subordinate. General Brusilov, impatient with this turn of events, deputed the commander of a neighboring division, Lieutenant General

⁸⁹ *RDAF*, p. 270. This account is from the military prosecutor's report of May 13, 1917, as a result of which the charges were dropped; nevertheless, 24 persons had been singled out by a field court-martial and shot. Fifty-five persons were shot in the neighboring 55th Regiment, even though the mutiny was brief and the regiment, according to its own commander, took vigorous part in the battle. Chemodanov (pp. 56-65) refers to the mutiny of another regiment during the same action, as a result of which 15 were shot. His own regiment went over the top, lost 50% of its men and officers, but failed to penetrate the barbed wire. In all, the offensive cost 23,000 men and gained only a mile or so of territory in a very small sector. The futility of such attacks was obvious to all, and the wonder is that not more mutinies occurred.

⁹⁰ See “V tsarskoi armii nakanune fevral'skoi burzhuzno-demokrati-cheskoi revoliutsii,” *KA*, LXXXI (1937), 105-20. The following account uses most of the documentary material.

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Ogorodnikov, to undertake an on-the-spot investigation and take charge of the situation. He arrived late at night and found the regiment in perfect military order, with watches posted and all men in their bunks. He spent the night conversing with individual soldiers, listening to their grievances, and sounding out their mood. His report shows that he took careful note of what they said. The following morning he conducted an inspection of the troops, queried each company in turn as to whether it was prepared to obey orders, and dismissed the recalcitrant units to their quarters (in the final analysis, the first and second battalions). The machine gunners, who were loyal, were posted, while the third and fourth battalions moved out. Soon the second battalion announced its readiness to follow suit. The first battalion tried unsuccessfully to bargain, gave in, and was convoyed by the machine gunners and scouts. Two days later the newly appointed corps commander, General Skoropadskii (later Hetman of the Ukraine), conducted an investigation and singled out twenty-three agitators for trial, of whom five were shot.

Such is the bare outline of events. They fall in with the pattern of most of the recorded instances, and indeed, with mutinies in other armies during the First World War (particularly in the French Army in May 1917). However, Ogorodnikov's detailed report and other documents bring out important facts that help to explain these incidents. The soldiers of the division, indeed, of the entire corps of which the Odoevskii Regiment was a part, had been on the line for over a year without relief and had been in three major actions since September, in which they incurred heavy losses. Their present position was exposed to the enemy, resulting in continual casualties, and was very unfavorably situated for attack. Their most recent replacements consisted of "political exiles" (probably workers punished for strikes) and penal companies brought to the front under escort. The Odoevskii Regiment belonged to one of the recently formed "third divisions" (created by reshuffling battalions within the same corps, but reducing the number per regiment from four to three) and hence lacked a full complement of officers and support units (all "third divisions" had the reputation of poor morale and discipline). Marching companies were attached as whole units to the new regiments instead of being distributed throughout (four out of twelve companies) and were given no additional front-line instruction. The officers from captain on down were all green

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youths fresh from officer training courses, and there were as yet no staff officers. Neither the regiment, the division, nor the corps were under their regular commanders, who were all on extended leave in Petrograd, and the replacement commander of the regiment was an old-fashioned parade ground type called out of retirement.

It turned out that the regiment they were to replace on the line, the 224th, had actually sent messengers *requesting* the Odoevskii Regiment not to replace them, as there was a prearranged plan for the entire division to demand replacement and extensive rest in the rear. Supposedly even the artillery units were ready to fall in with the plan by shelling any unit that failed to cooperate. No slogans with the slightest political coloration were in evidence, nor did Ogorodnikov's extensive queries turn up anything but the usual concerns—boots, food (*chechevitsa!*), poorly constructed bunkers, and anxiety over families (“Only old folks, women, and children are left in the villages, and they are starving!”). Ogorodnikov's inspection showed that in spite of complaints, the regiment was reasonably well supplied, clothed, and fed, only the hastily constructed bunkers leaving something to be desired. Only in the third and fourth companies were there signs of more fundamental alienation (allegations against the police, not enough land for the peasants), perhaps reflecting their recent composition from penal companies. However, only one of the four “new companies” was singled out as the source of agitation, whereas most of the “instigators” were from the old companies. Thus, the “politicals” were not responsible for the affair, and it is clear that the initiative came from outside the regiment and that normally disciplined artillerists were a party to it.

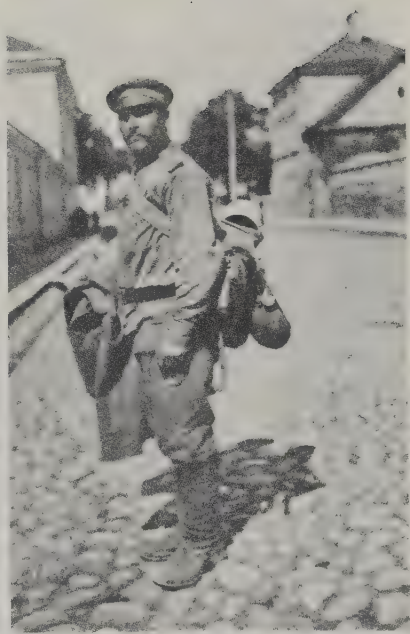
One can conclude from the evidence presented that battle fatigue and weariness with the war in general, rather than revolutionary agitation or infection from the rear, was the more immediate and fundamental factor in these revolts, and they do not in themselves reflect an incipient politicization of the army. The mutinies in the French Army of the following year were far more serious and more explicitly “political” in form, but they were also rooted fundamentally in the letdown after the Nivelle offensive. Rather, the Russian mutinies were symptoms of a more general malaise stemming from the soldiers' desperate situation at the front and anxiety for their families back home; in some cases this easily became compounded with political agitation, in other cases not.

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In the two instances cited that reveal "political" sentiments, proximity to a major source of propaganda, the urban center of Riga, was the probable reason, but did not in itself set off the revolts. Politicization, when it did come about on a massive scale in 1917, emanated from the rear and was most pronounced in the garrisons and transfer points, from whence it found its way to the front. The mutinies, on the other hand, reflected primarily the desperate situation at the front: the grinding effect of unending casualties, costly and futile attacks, and deteriorating organization and leadership on the most battered units. These two sources of alienation, however, were increasingly interacting and reinforcing each other, eroding the foundations of discipline and morale that must undergird any army. Nevertheless, the chief impetus to revolution was to come from the metropolis and was to descend with unexpected force on a disoriented, weary, and bitter front, which was to greet it as a deliverance from an impossible fate.



1. Leave-Taking of a Peasant Reservist. (Vladimir S. Littauer, *Russian Hussar* [London: J. A. Allen & Co. Ltd., 1965])



2. *top left*: Grand Duchesses Olga and Tatyana in the Uniform of Cavalry Officers. (Paul Rodzianko, *Tattered Banners: An Autobiography* [London: Seeley, Service & Co. Ltd., 1939]) 3. *top right*: A Mobilized Reservist in 1914. (Robert McCormick, *With the Russian Army* [New York, 1915]) 4. *bottom right*: Three Young Nobles of the Cadet Schools. (Littauer, *Russian Hussar*)





5. Regiment Moving up to the Front in 1915. (Laurence Stallings, *The First World War: A Photographic History* [New York, 1933])



6. Russian Prisoners of War. (Stallings, *The First World War*)



7. Improvised Field Hospital in a Church. (Stallings, *The First World War*)

CHAPTER IV



THE GREAT MUTINY

WESTERN AND SOVIET HISTORIOGRAPHY present basically different conceptualizations of the overturn that brought an end to the Russian monarchy. Whereas Western works tend to portray it as a consequence of the inner decay of a senescent bureaucracy and court that could not cope with the extraordinary demands of war, Soviet works insist that it was an "armed uprising," a "revolutionary assault" of the working class in classic Marxist terms. Yet Soviet historians fail to give any serious proof of the level of conscious preparation that they assume, just as their Western counterparts who characterize it as a "fall" or "collapse" pass all too quickly over the hundreds of thousands of workers, soldiers, and ordinary citizens who thronged the streets of Petrograd, burning down police stations, assaulting and arresting policemen, disarming and murdering officers, and breaking into weapons caches and passing out arms.¹ If one lays aside the obvious exaggerations and focuses on the indisputable facts, the

¹ The image of a "fall" finds expression in the works of Pares, Chamberlin, Ferro, and Florinsky. Oliver Radkey, in *The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism* (New York, 1958), expresses the typical formula as follows: "It was not so much a revolution in the accepted sense of the term as simply the toppling over, under slight external pressure, of a structure that had rotted away" (p. 127). Gerhard Wettig is one of the few to employ a caption suggesting popular revolt: "Die Petrograder Erhebung" (in "Die Rolle der russischen Armee im revolutionären Machtkampf," *FO*, xii [1967], 84). Soviet works follow an undeviating sequence: Lenin's ideological precepts, the assimilation thereof by the party, organizational preparations, the masses' response to the party's influence and the maturing of the "crisis," by which time the party and the masses are primed for revolutionary action. As an example, see the chapter titles and subheads in Vol. I of Mints: "The Bolsheviks are Ready," "The Army Is Ready for Revolution," "The Escalation [*pererastanie*] of Soldier Protest into Armed Struggle against Tsarism," and "The Escalation of the General Strike into Revolution" (pp. 928-29).

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viewpoints are not as irreconcilable as they appear at first. There was indeed a breakdown in the functioning of autocratic authority in the February days, climaxing a long process of moral and institutional decay of which the Rasputin affair was only the final episode, and it is certainly reflected in the incapacity to meet the military and economic demands of the war. However, Western accounts usually overlook that the war greatly exacerbated the traditional social cleavages, particularly as its burdens fell chiefly on the politically powerless sectors of the population, whose sense of alienation was rapidly building up to a breaking point in the months before the February Revolution. While the educated and enfranchised social layers ("census Russia") were primarily concerned about the incompetence of the tsarist administration in the conduct of the war, the workers, peasants, and poorer *meshchanstvo*, whether in uniform or not, were becoming profoundly impatient with the war itself.



The reports of Okhrana officials and other surveillance organs reveal a surprising awareness of the potential for revolution in the ugly mood shaping up in the lower-class urban populace.² If the mutinies at the front can be regarded as having no serious revolutionary intent, the mounting waves of strikes, particularly in Petrograd, cannot be so lightly dismissed. Though the strikes gained considerable momentum from purely economic causes, the workers had long since been politicized by decades of revolutionary propaganda and frequent clashes with tsarist authorities. Even though it is true that revolutionary organizations were constantly broken up during the war, and that the generation of workers that had experienced 1905 and the upsurge of 1913-1914 lost its cohesiveness through conscription, the influx from the villages, and a considerable increase in female and child labor, the legacy of the past was still very much alive, as attested by the massive strike on January 9, 1917, commemorating Bloody Sunday. Although most active revolutionary organizations (the Mezhraintsy, the "Initiative Group" of Mensheviks, and the Petrograd Committee of the Bolsheviks) were crippled by arrests preceding the strikes, the idea caught hold, and more than 150,000

² See "Doklad petrogradskogo okhranogo otdeleniia osobomu otdelu departamenta politzii, Oktjabria, 1916 g.," *KA*, xvii (1926), 3-35 (esp. 6, 12, 14).

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workers from 114 enterprises, including such industrial giants as Obukhov, Putilov, and the Franco-Russian and Nevskii Shipbuilding Works, took a holiday to hold meetings and listen to denunciations of tsarist authority and the war. This strike lasted only one day, but the waves of strikes in individual concerns and in other cities rose in an ever mounting tide until they reached massive proportions in mid-February. On February 14, the day the Duma came back into session, 90,000 workers from 58 enterprises in the capital were out on strike in response to an appeal from the Workers' Group of the Central War Industries Committee.³

From the twenty-second on, beginning with the lockout of 26,700 Putilov workers, the strike movement coalesced with general unrest in Petrograd over the lack of bread in the shops. Crowds of workers (particularly female workers), angry housewives, and young people milled through the streets, listening to orators, insulting the police, looting bakeries, and resisting any efforts to disperse or control them. According to official figures, 78,443 workers came out on February 23, 158,583 on the twenty-fourth, and 201,248 on the twenty-fifth (240,000 by another count).⁴ Since the mood of the crowds was desperate and showed no signs of abating, the government could only uphold its authority by bringing to bear adequate repressive measures. The regular police force of 3,500 was manifestly inadequate for this purpose, and so the problem inexorably became a military one.⁵

This brings us to the crucial factor in the February Revolution. The tsarist government had at its disposal an unlimited military

³ See Mints, I, 479, 486, and *passim*, and Shliapnikov, *Semandtsatyi god*, 4 vols. (Moscow, 1923-1931), chaps. 5-10. The latter is by far the most valuable single work on all aspects of the February Revolution. Not only was the author a reasonably reliable witness and participant in many of the events described, but he also supplies invaluable documentary material both in the text and as supplements. An excellent recent monograph is E. N. Burdzhakov, *Vtoraia russkaia revoliutsiia. Vosstanie v Petrograde* (Moscow, 1967) (cited hereafter as *Vostanie*, to distinguish it from its companion volume with the same first title).

⁴ Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, p. 143, and Shliapnikov, I, 78, 90-91, 110, 316-28. The lower figures are the Okhrana's, the higher are compiled from the police district reports.

⁵ E. I. Martynov, *Tsarskaia armiia v fevral'skoi revoliutsii* (Moscow, 1927), p. 62. This is an invaluable study by a prominent military historian and is based extensively on primary materials, though many of these are available elsewhere.

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force, which theoretically should easily have been able to re-establish control. In the capital were the reserve battalions of the fourteen guards regiments, each 6,000 or more strong (they are sometimes referred to as "regiments" because of their size), plus several regular reserve infantry regiments (the First and the 180th; in Krasnoe Selo and Peterhof were the Third, 171st, and 176th), a cycle battalion, an armored car division, the Sixth and the Guards Sappers regiments, and other auxiliary units. The available manpower in the Petrograd garrison was 180,000, with another 152,000 men in the surrounding area; furthermore, it should not have been difficult to detach and entrain additional units (cavalry units were the most feasible) from the Northern Front within a matter of hours.⁶ However, the matter was not that simple. The reserve battalions consisted largely of as yet unin-

⁶ Burdzhakov, *Vostanie*, pp. 96, 105, and Sobolev, *IZ*, LXXXVIII, pp. 60, 64, and *passim*. The figures in these works may be regarded as more reliable than the widely disparate ones in the literature, many of which are based on B. M. Kochakov, "Sostav Petrogradskogo garnizona v 1917 g.," *Uchenyye Zapiski Leningradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, no. 205 (1956), *Seriia istoricheskikh nauk*, vyp. 24, who used the greatly inflated estimates of the Commissary Department, which included military hospitals and many civilians working for military institutions. Data from Burdzhakov, Sobolev, and other works allow the following approximate computation of the makeup of the garrisons:

<i>Petrograd</i>		<i>Suburbs</i>	
Guards Infantry regiments	95,000*	Third, 171st, 176th Infantry regiments	30,000
First, 180th Infantry regiments	22,000	First, Second Machine Gun regiments	17,700
Militia formations	8,000	Marine Guards Equipage Regiment	6,000
Ninth Dragoon Cavalry Regiment	4,700	Artillery, guards, and heavy brigades	10,000
Artillery depot units	9,500	Schools for <i>praporshchiki</i>	2,500
Sixth, Guards Sappers regiments	4,800	First, Fourth Don Cossacks regiments	3,200
Electrotechnical units	5,000	Kronshtadt (naval, fortress, and infantry regiments)	80,000
Motorized units (auto, armored car, cycle)	17,000	Miscellaneous (militia; one railroad battalion)	2,000
Aviation units	3,100		
Guards Pontoon Regiment	1,600		
Railroad battalions	2,000		
Military schools	6,500		
Higher academies	1,000		
TOTAL	180,200	TOTAL	151,900

* Based on the average of five regiments of the guards for which reliable figures are available. Sobolev's estimate is based on Kochakov's, which is likely to be inaccurate.

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structed new recruits and recuperating veterans who were very reluctant to be returned to duty; also, they were poorly provided with officers and weapons. True, certain formations—the training companies for NCOs (usually one company out of four in each reserve “regiment”), the units from officer training schools, and the armored car and cycle units—were thought to be reliable and were better trained and disciplined. But the overriding, unanswered question was how deeply the general dissatisfaction in the country had penetrated the units that would have to be used. If even a small fraction of the total available force could be depended upon to carry out the task of armed repression resolutely, the government would have no need to worry; but significant defections, or even passivity, within such units would spell disaster.

The government certainly had enough information at its disposal to realize that it had to be prepared for the present contingency. Strikes had assumed threatening proportions since the previous October, and information supplied by Okhrana agents and censorship authorities clearly indicated the dangerous state of the public mind. Furthermore, the incessant clashes of the ministers with the Duma, the unruly press, which constantly harped on German influences, and the various plots by political figures, the court aristocracy, and army officers made it obvious even to the rather dull minds that at this juncture were answerable for the fate of the autocracy that extraordinary measures were necessary to avert disaster. It was characteristic of the times that the four persons most directly charged with responsibility for public order were recent, Rasputin-inspired appointees: A. D. Protopopov, the madcap Minister of the Interior, General M. A. Beliaev, War Minister, General A. P. Balk, Petrograd City Prefect (in command of all police forces), and General S. S. Khabalov, chief of the Petrograd Military District.⁷ It is fairly clear that after the death of Rasputin the imperial couple resolved to dismiss or neutralize the Duma, fearing above all popular demonstrations on its behalf.

The military forces in the capital, which heretofore had been under the jurisdiction of General Ruzskii, the commander of the Northern Front, whom the tsarina knew to be implacably hostile to her inner clique, were restored to the administrative jurisdic-

⁷ See Pares, *Fall of the Russian Monarchy*, pp. 327, 380, 411, 437, and Protopopov's testimony before the Extraordinary Investigative Commission of the Provisional Government, in *PTsR*, iv, 4-7, 13, 79, 91.

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tion of the Petrograd Military District, that is, directly subordinated to Nicholas as Commander in Chief, and put in the hands of General Khabalov, a candidate recommended to the tsarina by Protopopov.⁸ Various measures were taken to strengthen the military force in the capital and to work out a plan to handle disorders. In December the tsar himself had ordered that two divisions of guards cavalry currently in the front reserve be transferred to the capital, but General Gurko, who had been entrusted with the execution of the measure, allowed himself to be persuaded that billets for them in the region of the capital were not available, and instead he dispatched two battalions (that is, not even a regiment) of the Marine Guards Equipage—without informing the tsar!⁹ Sometime in February, the First and Fourth Don Cossack regiments were also transferred—on whose initiative is not clear—from the Northern Front to the capital.

Under Khabalov's supervision a plan for maintaining order was worked out in early February, coordinating the roles of the police and the military authorities. Troops were assigned to different sections of the city under the command of the regular gendarmes officers of the respective districts, who were given the task of guarding specific factories, bridges, thoroughfares, and public institutions, all worked out to the very last detail.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the lines of authority were thoroughly confused. General Chebykin, a guards officer, was put in immediate command of the security forces of the capital, though it is not clear whether he was directly responsible to Khabalov or only indirectly through City Prefect Balk. Protopopov, in his testimony before the Extraordinary Investigative Commission of the Provisional Govern-

⁸ According to S. P. Beletskii, a police official, in *PTsR*, IV, 492.

⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 46 (Protopopov), Gen. Basil Gourko (Vasilii Gurko), *Memories and Impressions of War and Revolution in Russia 1914-1917* (London, 1918), p. 264, and Melgunov, *Na putiakh*, pp. 133ff., 148-49. Gurko's complicity is not established by these sources, but Protopopov's testimony indicates that he was suspected by the tsar for his contacts with Guchkov and was under police observation. However, Adm. Alexander Bubnov unequivocally affirms his involvement as a fact well known at Stavka, even his intent to assassinate the tsar should he refuse a ministry of confidence. See Bubnov, *V tsarskoi stavke* (New York, 1951), pp. 303-4. He implicates Gen. Alekseev as well, whereas other sources portray him as sympathetic but unwilling to participate. The evidence is much too tentative to come to any firm conclusions.

¹⁰ See Shliapnikov, I, 293-303, and *PTsR*, II, 45-46 (Protopopov), and I, 93-100 (gendarme official E. K. Klimovich).

ment, claimed that he and the Department of Police (under his jurisdiction nationwide) were not involved in the operations at all.¹¹ But since the gendarme officers were in command of the city districts, confusion between the military and police lines of authority were inevitable. Friction seems to have been minimized, however, by a lack of communication. Colonel P. U. Danilchenko, commander of the Izmailovskii Reserve Battalion, claims that unit commanders attached to districts were never consulted. When a regimental commander raised the suggestion of a mobile mounted force at the disposal of General Chebykin, the idea was rejected, though in fact the Cossacks and the mounted gendarme division logically constituted such a force.¹² Obviously, little attention was being devoted to practical contingencies. Those who were in contact with General Khabalov invariably describe him as phlegmatic, distracted, and easily confused. Very little is said of General Chebykin, except that he was very secretive about his plans, became sick on the day disorders broke out, and had to be replaced.¹³

One of the controversies that has not yet been cleared up is whether the strategic deployment of machine guns on rooftops in the capital was a part of the plans for suppressing street demonstrations. There are numerous reports of machine-gun fire from the rooftops during the decisive days of the Revolution (February 27 and 28), and bands of roving soldiers claimed to have cleaned out the "police nests."¹⁴ That Protopopov had secretly trained police detachments in the use of machine guns and purposely provoked street demonstrations to drown the revolution in blood was one of the universally believed legends of the post-February

¹¹ *PTsR*, I, 154.

¹² See Danilchenko's manuscript, "Materialy dlia istorii po chasti zapasnago bataliona L. Gv. Izmailovskago Polka do marta, 1917 g.," in the Izmailovskii collection at RA.

¹³ *PTsR*, I, 184 (Khabalov).

¹⁴ Aside from references in personal accounts, see reports from the streets to the Military Commission of the Duma, published in "Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia v Petrograde," *KA*, xli-xlii (1930), 53-67 (15 instances, Feb. 28-Mar. 1). Gen. Beliaev, denying any foreknowledge or complicity, nevertheless affirms that he personally heard a machine gun from the top of the Ministry of Finance building (*PTsR*, II, 234). Viktor Shklovskii, a participant in armored car operations to wipe out machine-gun nests, is of the opinion that few, if any, of the panicky reports are genuine (*Revoliutsiia i front* [Petrograd, 1921], p. 9), whereas another participant, Aleksei Tarasov-Rodionov, recounts three instances of his own exploits in great detail (*February 1917* [New York, 1931], pp. 146-53).

days. A number of investigators (Burtsev, Melgunov, Katkov) have claimed that the rooftop machine guns were a product of the overworked imagination of the public in the grip of fear and confusion during the critical days.¹⁵ Supporting this viewpoint is the fact that the extensive testimony on this question before the Extraordinary Investigative Commission, which included all the leading principals (Khabalov, Beliaev, Balk, Protopopov, and a number of Okhrana and police officials) produced no proof of a prior plan, or even of the existence of special police detachments trained in machine guns or of any orders to put them to use.

The genesis of the popular belief can be fixed with certainty. At a mid-January session of the Special Conference on Defense, Rodzianko accused Protopopov of diverting machine guns sent from England, which were intended for the front, to police units for quelling expected domestic disturbances.¹⁶ In this form the rumor circulated through select political circles well before the revolution and easily worked its way into popular consciousness to account for any unexplained gunfire, of which there was a good deal between February 27 and March 2. Nevertheless, reports of eye (and ear) witnesses on machine-gun fire and the actions of soldiers in removing them from the rooftops are so numerous, that it must be presumed that the reports had some foundation in fact, even if the total number was greatly exaggerated in the general atmosphere of panic and fear of counterrevolution.¹⁷ Though

¹⁵ See Katkov, *Russia 1917*, p. 264, Martynov, pp. 62ff., and Melgunov, *Martovskie dni 1917 goda* (Paris, 1961), pp. 163-68. Martynov states categorically that the police were *not* armed with machine guns and cites an investigation by Vladimir Burtsev. Although Melgunov's is the most serious investigation, he delights in exposing "legends" on the basis of sometimes arbitrary verdicts on the evidence.

¹⁶ Melgunov, *Martovskie dni*, p. 167, and M. V. Rodzianko, *Krushenie imperii* (Leningrad, 1927), p. 216. See also Shliapnikov, I, 310, for a Bolshevik leaflet of February 25, 1917, which refers to the Special Conference, to the "plan," and to a Gen. Gordon. The latter's identity is established as a gendarme official deputized to Khabalov for counterespionage in the factories, but his role in the machine-gun affair is not clarified in any of the investigations. See *PTsR*, I, 211, 216.

¹⁷ Investigators of the Extraordinary Commission concluded that all machine guns found afterwards in the streets had belonged to specific military units in the capital; thus the likelihood of a special police detachment is virtually nil. Melgunov, *Martovskie dni*, p. 166. The most plausible explanation is that in a few cases officers of guards units ordered their own machine guns to be posted on the rooftops.

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the question cannot be resolved with finality on the basis of the surviving evidence, the myth in its popular form can certainly be discounted, as it presumes a too consciously contrived provocation to square with the pitiful improvisations.

Rather, the verdict of the evidence is that the measures taken were quite perfunctory and ill-considered and that the persons charged with their execution were distinguished by gross ineptitude and timidity; the likely difficulties in the employment of this vast armed force against street crowds were not even anticipated. Above all, no thought was given to the possibility that garrison troops might defect and that weapons could be passed into the hands of the insurgents. True, it was taken into consideration that new recruits, recuperating wounded, and technical units dominated by worker draftees might not fire if called upon, and therefore only the training companies of the reserve battalions (soldiers from the front being trained as NCOs) were to be used in the actual control of street crowds. Protopopov testified before the Extraordinary Investigative Commission that the dependable force of soldiers available for helping the police to control the streets was reckoned at 12,000 (out of the total garrison of 180,000),¹⁸ and that the loyalty of the Cossacks and of the training companies in the case of serious clashes was assumed to be unshakable.



All contemporary witnesses agree that the strikes and street demonstrations that erupted on February 23 came as a surprise both to political groups and to the authorities. Protopopov and Khabalov, gratified that on the opening day of the Duma (February 14) the strikers had remained in their factory districts and that the worker representatives on the Central War Industries Committee had been arrested without major reactions, were convinced that the main danger had passed.¹⁹ The revolutionary groups with contacts in the factory districts (the Bolsheviks, the Mezhrailontsy, and the Menshevik Internationalists) were aware of mounting sentiment for a decisive confrontation, and they scheduled factory meetings with party orators for International Women's Day on February 23 (March 8, N.S.), but hoped to restrain the workers until a major action could be organized and

¹⁸ *PTsR*, IV, 93 (Protopopov). ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

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coordinated, possibly for May 1. An interparty steering committee was meeting on the very morning of the twenty-third to discuss future strategy when news arrived that the female workers in the Vyborg Side were already pouring out of the factories and bringing out their male counterparts in nearby factories by means of shouts, stones, and snowballs. Their plea was to support the women of Petrograd in their demand for bread and an end to the killing inflation.²⁰

By one o'clock in the afternoon huge crowds, which included housewives, street youths, and ordinary citizens, had collected along the Sampsonievskii Prospect on the far side of the Neva and began pressing toward the Aleksandrovskii Bridge, which would bring them to the major arteries leading to the city center (their goal was Nevskii Prospect, the heart of the "bourgeois district," with the huge Kazan and Znamenskii squares, which were traditional sites for revolutionary demonstrations). At four o'clock a crowd of about four thousand crossed over from the Vyborg Side to the neighboring Petrograd Side (another working-class district between two branches of the Neva) and tried without success to pass over to the center by the Troitskii Bridge. Repeated forays by the police could not break up the perpetually regrouping crowds, but they successfully blocked passage over the bridges. Only late in the afternoon did significant numbers cross over on the ice (dangerous because the river was not completely frozen) and join other demonstrators in the center. A crowd of a thousand or so milled along Liteinyi Prospect (the major artery from the Aleksandrovskii Bridge to Znamenskii Square) and, though easily dispersed by police and Cossack patrols, brought out several factories (a weapons plant and a nail factory with five thousand workers). A crowd of similar size, consisting primarily of women and minors, formed along the Nevskii, but it was also broken up by mounted police and cavalry (two platoons of the Ninth Reserve Cavalry Regiment). By evening many factories in all parts of the capital had heard of the disorders and either came out

²⁰ See the memoirs of the worker-Bolshevik V. Kaiurov, "Shest' dnei fevral'skoi revoliutsii," *PR*, XIII (1923), 158-59, and Shliapnikov, I, 74ff. The account here will draw heavily on Shliapnikov, Burdzhakov, and *PTsR*. Shliapnikov cites either in full or in long extracts the daily police and Okhrana reports, and Burdzhakov makes extensive use of unpublished sources. Khabalov and Beliaev recount, step by step, the information known to them (*PTsR*, I, 182ff., and II, 225-48).

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immediately or held meetings to discuss a course of action for the next day. All over the capital streetcars were halted and the key mechanism removed. Here and there stores were plundered and windows broken, but there were no reports of gunfire or serious injuries.

The reports record that the vast majority of the demonstrators were women and that the only prominent demand was for bread. The women very boldly pressed on police lines, lustily exercising their gift of speech to persuade the guardians of order of the intolerable conditions of their existence. Young boys armed with rocks and snowballs delighted in playing cat and mouse with mounted policemen, but few students, intellectuals, or middle-class persons were observable among the crowds. Although it is true that a large number of housewives and people of the lower classes joined the street crowds and under their protection raided bakeries and grocery shops, the conventional picture that the disorders began as riots in the bread lines must be discarded. Only with the stimulus of large numbers of workers pouring out of the factories onto the street and crying for bread were significant numbers of ordinary citizens emboldened to plunder the shops. On this first day the police predominated in the maintenance of order. The district police chiefs were on the streets directing their forces according to the original plan, and in some cases were subjected to indignities by the crowds. Small patrols of cavalry aided the police in breaking up large crowds, and the military units posted to factories and institutions were strengthened; but otherwise, military forces were held in reserve.²¹

The following day every industrial district of the capital was seized by strikes, and the street crowds gathered early and in imposing numbers (the size had approximately doubled—158,583 by one official figure, 197,000 by another). It was a repetition of the previous day's events on a citywide scale. Shops were closed, and police posts disappeared from the streets, auguring a major test of strength. A crowd of some ten thousand persons from the Vyborg Side poured over the Aleksandrovsii Bridge and, breaking through a double line of mounted police and cavalry, flooded Liteinyi Prospect. The crowds were pressed into side streets by police with drawn sabers and piecemeal forced back over the bridge. Another crowd tried to bring out the Petrograd Side and

²¹ All according to police report, in Shliapnikov, I, 77-86.

pass over the Neva by the Troitskii Bridge, but it too was blocked by heavy cordons of Cossacks and soldiers of the Moskovskii Guards. However, large crowds also formed on the Petrograd Side, on Vasilevskii Island, and in the Kolomenskii and Harbor industrial districts. Clashes with the police and looting were universal. Periodic demonstrations took place all day on Nevskii Prospect, forming first at the Kazan Square and then at the Znamenskii (the numbers given are from one to three thousand). In addition to cries for bread, one now heard: "Down with the government!" "Down with the tsar!" "Down with the war!" Revolutionary songs and red banners emblazoned with slogans marked the advent of revolutionary intellectuals, party-affiliated workers, and students. Violent assaults on the police with chunks of ice and heavy objects (even a few pistol shots) were a typical feature of the day, and several severe injuries resulted, but again, no firearms were turned on the demonstrators.²²

There was a marked increase in the use of Cossacks, cavalry, and soldiers to disperse crowds and block off streets and bridges, but on this fateful day it became obvious that the Cossacks were performing their duties very unwillingly, and in several instances they deliberately avoided clashes with the crowds. Word of this spread rapidly, and thereafter an informal alliance, with a specific ritual, was observed between the two. The crowds cheered and the Cossacks waved back as they passed harmlessly through them. A young girl is reported to have boldly stepped out of the crowd to offer a Cossack officer a nosegay, which he gallantly affixed to his uniform. Whenever the crowds were able to press up close to idling Cossacks, lively exchanges took place. One witness recorded the following: "We have husbands, fathers, and brothers at the front. Here there is only hunger, work beyond our strength, and humiliation! You also have mothers, wives, and children. We demand bread and an end to the war!"²³ Usually the Cossacks responded only with significant smiles. If an officer noted his men becoming too involved with the crowd, he would simply order them to gallop off. Above all, they showed themselves to be quite

²² Ibid., pp. 91-101. Khabalov insists (*PTsR*, I, 184) that his standing orders until February 25 were to disperse crowds with cavalry and "cold weapons" (flats of swords and nagaikas), but not to shoot. This is borne out by the police reports and not contradicted by other sources.

²³ I. Gordienko, *Iz boevogo proshlogo* (Moscow, 1957), p. 57.

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indifferent to the insults and indignities directed against the police, which finds bitter documentation in police reports.²⁴

The same illicit fraternization was transpiring, though less conspicuously, in infantry units. Sergeant Kirpichnikov, who would become the famous hero of the Volynskii Regiment, was on duty with his training battalion on Znamenskii Square on this day. He constantly reassured his officers that everything was under control, while promising the crowds that they would not be fired upon; he also remained passive as an orator mounted the monument to Alexander III and harangued the crowd, explaining to his nervous superior officer that the crowd was simply asking for bread and would soon go away. While the officers amused themselves in nearby pubs, he allowed people to filter through his cordons and converse with his men.²⁵

On the following day, the twenty-fifth, the movement took on the aspect of a general strike, with the forces of order under a virtual state of siege. An additional fifty thousand workers poured into the streets and pressed on the center of the capital from all sides. During the day the students of most institutions of higher learning declared a strike and joined the workers. Stores, schools, factories, and public services were closed down, bringing normal activities to a virtual standstill. The police could no longer cope with the size of the crowds, which circumvented and broke through their lines and regrouped as quickly as they were broken up. Many policemen were assailed by hard objects, toppled from their mounts, disarmed, and beaten by the crowd. The military backup forces were apparently used sparingly, because of their uncertain reliability. The Cossack units on this day refused outright to aid the police and cultivated the cheers of the crowds. Toward the end of the day, a Cossack cut down a policeman with his sword on Znamenskii Square when the latter tried to apprehend demonstrators. The revolutionizing effect of this incident on the street crowds was said to have been extraordinary.²⁶

²⁴ Shliapnikov, I, 95.

²⁵ See T. Kirpichnikov, "Vosstanie 1. gv. Volynskogo polka v fevrale 1917 g.," *By*, xxvii-xxviii (Nov.-Dec. 1917), 5-6.

²⁶ There are numerous, conflicting versions of this incident in the literature, some saying that the policeman was shot, others that he was cut down, others that he was only wounded, and one that his assailant was a Cossack officer who retaliated when a police official struck a Cossack. But on the

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Crowds of up to five thousand were forming along the Nevskii all day long. Still, the vast majority of the demonstrators were prevented from reaching the center, and at no time did the police completely lose control.

In spite of the aggressiveness of the crowds, there was remarkably little shooting. The first blood was shed, however, when soldiers of the Ninth Cavalry Regiment opened fire on the Nevskii, supposedly in answer to a pistol shot, leaving eighteen dead and wounded.²⁷ The police were still under orders simply to break up crowds and control street movements with "cold weapons," and to avoid using firearms. Except for a few pistol shots exchanged for flying bottles and ice chunks, they apparently followed instructions. This day, for the first time, the police attempted to arrest sizable numbers of demonstrators, but in almost every case the arrested, after being temporarily confined in the courtyards of large buildings, were freed by the crowds or sympathetic Cossacks. The military units other than Cossacks that are reported to have been on duty this day were from the following regiments (usually the training company): the Ninth Cavalry, the Third Guards Riflers, and the Volynskii and Finlandskii Guards Infantry. A Finlandskii detachment was on guard duty at the giant Petrograd Tube Steel Works, where a lieutenant, exasperated by the taunts of a crowd of workers and fearful of their influence on his men, shot down an offending worker point-blank.²⁸ Kirpichnikov's Volynskiis were again on duty at Znamenskii Square; though his commanding officer, Staff Captain Mashkin, was strangely passive, two junior officers behaved very aggressively toward the street crowds and threatened to shoot. When one of them tried to mount the equestrian statue of Alexander III to seize a red flag from the orator, he was knocked down. Angrily, he demanded that his soldiers seize the culprit, but they claimed "they didn't notice who did it." A confrontation was avoided by the arrival of Cossacks, who interposed themselves and allowed the demonstration to continue.²⁹

One can say that on this day all the groups involved—the crowds, the revolutionaries, and the authorities—became aware

effect, which is the important point, all agree; see Gordienko, p. 58, and Kaiurov, *PR*, XIII, 163-64.

²⁷ Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, p. 148, and *PTsR*, I, 190 (Khabalov).

²⁸ See *PTsR*, I, 190, and Shliapnikov, I, 115 (police report).

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

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that something more than simply strikes and street demonstrations was in the making. The crowds, perceiving the confusion and weakness of the police, concentrated on neutralizing the soldiers and Cossacks by friendly approaches. Shliapnikov claims that he advised party workers not to arm themselves, but rather to persuade the soldiers to surrender their weapons and bring over their comrades.³⁰ Doubtless the demonstrators needed no such instructions: they shouted sympathetically to the soldiers across police lines, engaged them in conversation where possible, and sent messages into the barracks via guards on duty or through fences. By the third day the slogans "Away with the autocracy!" and "Down with the war!" accompanied by red banners and party oratory, had largely replaced the cries for bread.



Only on the twenty-fifth did the authorities in the capital consider the situation serious enough to be reported to the tsar, who had just returned to Stavka. Khabalov, Protopopov, and Beliaev all sent telegrams to Stavka reporting on the street demonstrations and clashes with the crowds, but making assurances that proper measures had been taken to suppress the disorders.³¹ Khabalov's report, which cites Okhrana figures for the number of strikers (200,000 on the twenty-fifth), disingenuously claimed that "the attempt of the workers to reach the Nevskii has been successfully thwarted" and that "those who did get through were driven back by Cossacks." Protopopov's report was more alarming in specific details (the murder of the policeman at Znamenskii Square, the attempts by the crowds to fraternize with the soldiers), but assured the supreme commander that "energetic steps are being taken by the military commanders to prevent a repetition of the disorders." The generals at Stavka could not have been misled as to the seriousness of the disorders, however, as Khabalov notified them that several cavalry detachments had been called in from the surrounding area to reinforce the Petrograd garrison.

³⁰ Op. cit., p. 105.

³¹ For texts of Khabalov's and Protopopov's telegrams, see "Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia 1917 goda," *KA*, XXI (1927), 4-5, and "Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia v dokumentakh," *PR*, XIII (1923), 290. Beliaev's telegram is alluded to in Lukomskii, p. 124 (he was at the time Quartermaster General at Stavka and privy to all communications) and ended with the assurance that "the disorders will be halted tomorrow, February 26."

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In reply, Nicholas that same night, issued the fatal order to Khabalov: "I command you no later than tomorrow to put an end to the disorders in the capital, which are impermissible at a time of war with Germany and Austria." Khabalov was thunderstruck. In his mind the order could only be interpreted as a mandate to apply maximum force at once, in other words, to fire on demonstrators who refused to disperse. He was himself inclined to let events run their course in the hope that the crowd would soon tire of endless demonstrations, a not unlikely prospect. With resignation he issued his instructions to the assembled unit commanders:

The sovereign has ordered that the disorders be stopped by tomorrow. Therefore the ultimate means must be applied. If the crowd is small, without banners, and not aggressive, then utilize cavalry to disperse it. If the crowd is aggressive and displays banners, then act according to regulations, that is, signal three times and open fire.³²

The following day a proclamation signed by Khabalov was posted in the streets: "I forewarn the populace of Petrograd that I have ordered the employment of all weapons and will shirk from nothing to achieve the restoration of order in the capital."³³

This thoughtlessly taken decision proved fatal for the dynasty. It guaranteed that the movement would not remain within the boundaries of the usual workers' demonstrations, which, though imposing, usually played themselves out, but would become a massive defection of the military arm upon which the autocracy depended for its very existence. Up to this point the soldiers had not been forced to commit themselves irrevocably. Their sympathies were clearly on the side of the demonstrators, and the latter "understood" that they performed their duties under the threat of severe disciplinary reprisals and considerably avoided provoking them. Even many officers showed themselves reluctant to go beyond a token execution of their orders to aid the police. Three days of close contact had amply acquainted the soldiers with the temper of the crowds, and they felt no impulse to restrain their reasonable demands for bread. Being from the same social layer as most of the demonstrators, they shared to a large extent the general hostility to the police, the government, and the endless

³² *PTsR*, I, 190, 191.

³³ Archival source cited in Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, p. 168.

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war. Now, abruptly, they were to be made the instrument of bloody repression against people of their own kind. To refuse, or even to hesitate, meant to be punished with all the force of military law, which could mean the firing squad. Therefore, the only course for those who were not prepared to obey the command to shoot was to mutiny en masse, counting on the safety of numbers.

In times past, the government could have counted on the ingrained habits of discipline, loyalty, and fear to overcome any reticence on the part of the soldiers to fire on unruly crowds. But the present situation was a far cry from 1905, when the thought of disobedience was a horrifying novelty. Many of the old-timers, the over-forty *ratniki* and family men, had absorbed the lessons of 1905 and were determined not to be blindly used again. Recuperating veterans, who were also strongly represented in the reserve units (usually one out of four companies), were greatly embittered over the war, disgusted with the government, and violently antipathetic toward the police, who in their view should have long since been sent to the front in their stead.³⁴ In other words, all the psychological motives that we have seen in previous chapters predisposed them to side with the demonstrators. True, the younger recruits were less likely to be deeply disaffected by the economic and social grievances so vital to family men, but like young persons generally, they were quick to pick up a mood of defiance from others and thought far less of the risks involved.

Unfortunately, it is virtually impossible to fix the reactions and

³⁴ On the restiveness of recuperating wounded, see Danilchenko's MS, pp. 28-29, in RA; Sobolev, *IZ*, LXXXVIII, 83-84, estimates their number at 1,000 per reserve battalion, or 20,000 in all. Though both the over-forties and the recruits of the latest call-up were in training in late February 1917, the exact proportions cannot be determined, since the dates at which separate batches commenced and completed training would have to be known. The only data of use are in Golovin, I, 79-80, who says that in March in the Keksgolmskii Reserve Battalion there were 5,269 "old servers" and 1,145 young soldiers, or a percentage ratio of 83:17, which seems disproportionate, although "old servers" probably means all who were not new recruits, including recovering wounded and NCO trainees. Over-forties of the first-category *ratniki* had been called up the previous September, as had the second category up to age 37, and all these had doubtless completed their training. Those in the capital in February were probably the 38-41 age group of the second-category *ratniki*, which was called up in October but inducted somewhat later in staggered groups. The 19-year-olds had just been called up in February (a group of 600,000), and most of them were doubtless not yet in training.

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emotions of the soldiers at the time of the mutiny, as all subsequent accounts are heavily colored by the outcome. Over and above the considerations that predisposed the soldiers to sympathize with the demonstrators, it is very likely that a good many of them had already contemplated the alternatives and inwardly crossed the Rubicon. There had already been a number of instances such as the one at Kremenchug, when punitive units refused to fire on rioters, and rumors concerning them were certainly in circulation. Such an incident had taken place in the Vyborg Side of the capital in the fall of 1916, and many garrison soldiers were doubtless aware of it. During the October strikes workers from the Novyi Lessner plant were assaulted by the police with whips and sabers outside the barracks of the 181st Reserve Regiment. The soldiers, observing the proceedings from the barracks enclosure over a flimsy fence, stormed into the streets to aid the workers. The training company and Cossacks were called out to pacify the mutineers, but they refused orders to open fire.³⁵ Later, during the anxious days before the opening of the Duma on February 14, 1917, when many soldiers were posted to factories in the capital, an Okhrana agent reported that an unidentified soldier approached the guard detail at an unnamed factory settlement, persuading the men to turn their rifles on the police. Alluding to the incident of the previous fall, the soldier suggested that now was the time to settle accounts. "They gave us two hundred bullets apiece to shoot the strikers," he explained. "It's about time for us, when they give the command to shoot, to knock off the Pharaohs." When workers intervened to suggest that the soldiers needed to be better organized, the soldier indignantly replied that they were already organized and knew what to do: "They've drunk our blood long enough; our people suffer at the front while they stuff their mugs here and take our last crust of bread."³⁶ Just how widespread such sentiments were is difficult to say, but the alacrity with which many units went over to the uprising suggests considerable psychological preparation.³⁷

³⁵ *RDAF*, pp. 208-9, and Gordienko, pp. 53-54. The 181st was considered thereafter too dangerous to be left in the capital and was transferred to Kronshtadt. *PTsR*, IV, 85.

³⁶ Quoted in the report of the agent "Krestianinov," Feb. 10, 1917, in "Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia i okhrannoe otdelenie," *By*, xxix (1918), 160-61.

³⁷ The men of the first battalion of the Marine Guards Equipage settled among themselves whether they would fire on the people as soon as they

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The decisive test came on the twenty-sixth, a Sunday, when most of the factories were closed. Soldiers, cavalry, and police were deployed in unprecedented numbers throughout the capital in a determined effort to prevent crowds from forming in the center. For most of the day they were successful, but by early afternoon sufficient numbers had filtered through and around the pickets to frustrate the intentions of the police. Here and there soldier cordons, disconcerted by pleas not to shoot, melted with the crowds. By two o'clock in the afternoon shooting began along the Nevskii, first from police revolvers, then from soldier training companies, and, it is reported, from machine guns. The crowds took refuge in doorways and courtyards, and simply reformed when it appeared that the firing had ceased. Finally, crowds boldly pressed on soldier picket lines blocking access to the Nevskii, convinced that the latter would not fire. At first the warning salvos were respected, but soon the crowds were emboldened to ignore them.³⁸ Around 3:00 P.M. the Pavlovskii training company opened fire directly into a crowd along the Moika Canal, leaving dead and wounded. This action was repeated again at the corner of the Sadovaia and on Znamenskii Square, as a result of which at least forty demonstrators were killed and as many wounded. The total number of casualties on this day must have been well over a hundred, as the police collected sixty bodies and the demonstrators carried off many more. Kirpichnikov is reluctant to admit that his Volynskii were involved in the heavy bloodletting on the Znamenskii and claims that he instructed his men to fire over the heads of the demonstrators. The officer in charge, Lieutenant Vorontsov, who was thoroughly drunk, berated his men for their poor aim and began firing indiscriminately into the crowd with a soldier's rifle.³⁹ By five o'clock the hopelessness of the situation had led most demonstrators to disperse. In the opinion of the Bolshevik Kaiurov, the movement had been defeated.⁴⁰

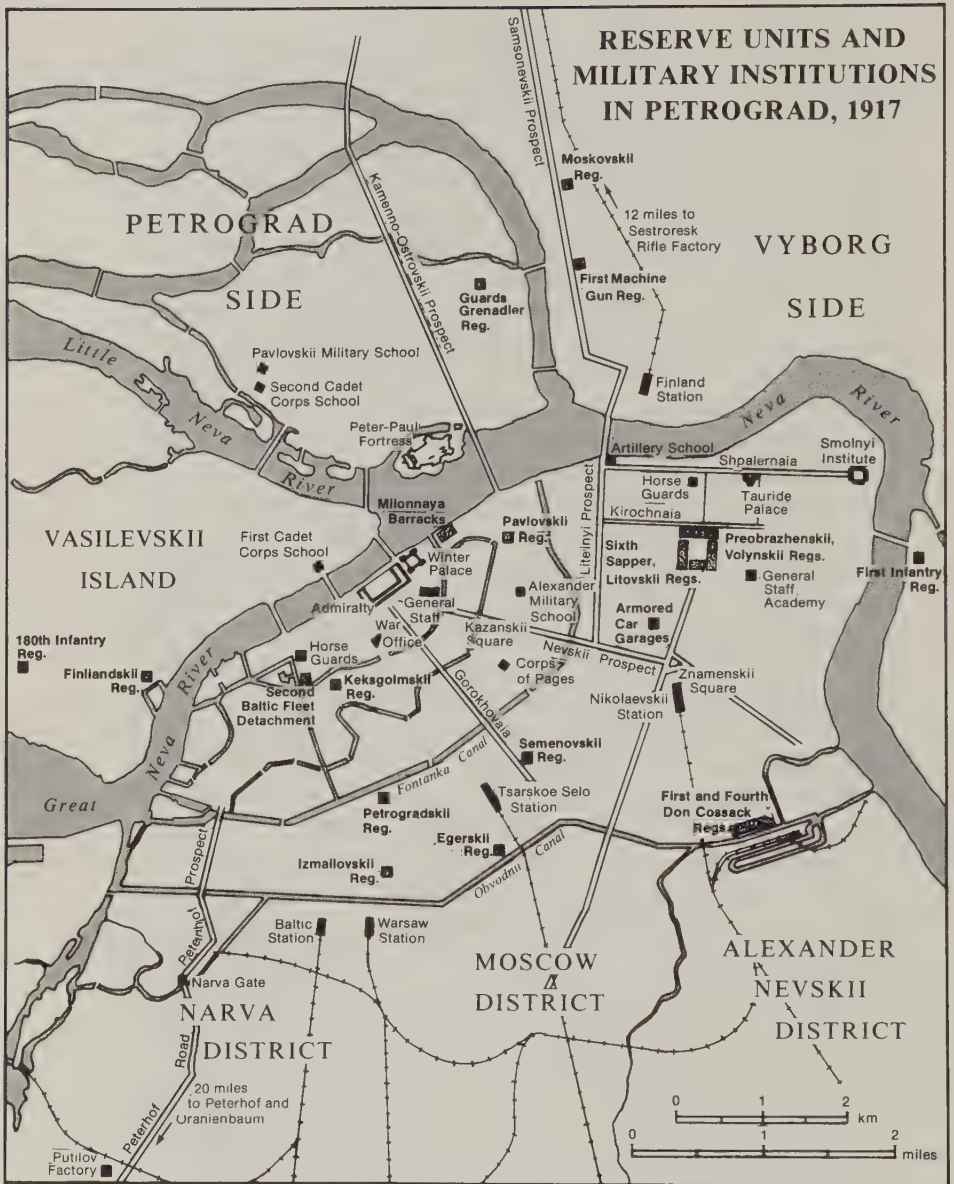
heard they were being transferred from the front to Tsarskoe Selo (they well understood the purpose of the move). See F. Sorokin, *Gvardeiskii Ekvipazh v fevral'skie dni 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1932), pp. 9ff.

³⁸ The Okhrana report for this day notes: "With preliminary firing into the air, the crowds not only failed to disperse but also greeted the salvos with derision. Only with direct fire into the thick of the crowd was it possible to break them up." Quoted in Shliapnikov, I, 130.

³⁹ Kirpichnikov, *By*, xxvii-xxviii, 6-7.

⁴⁰ Kaiurov, *PR*, XIII, 166.

RESERVE UNITS AND MILITARY INSTITUTIONS IN PETROGRAD, 1917





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At precisely this moment, however, the soldiers in the Pavlovskii barracks heard that their own training company had fired on the people. Without hesitation they broke into the arms chamber, seized thirty or so rifles, and, against the pleas of their officers, poured out into the streets. A volunteer officer from the street crowds put himself at their head and led them along the Ekaterina Canal toward the Nevskii, where their fellow Pavlovskii were reported to be shooting. A patrol of mounted police drew up on the opposite side of the canal and, apparently reading the situation, opened fire. The young officer ordered the Pavlovskii to drop to their knees and return fire, which persuaded the mounted police to gallop off. According to a post-February chronicler, I. Lukash, the police suffered three casualties and the insurgents two, one of which was the unknown officer.⁴¹ The Pavlovskii resumed their march to the Nevskii, but were soon cut off by a detachment of Preobrazhenskii under the command of Captain V. N. Timichenko-Ruban, who has left an eyewitness account.⁴² According to his version, the roll of the drums signaling a volley was sufficient to disperse the disorganized mutineers; according to Lukash's account (probably less reliable, considering when it was written), the Preobrazhenskii withdrew after hearing the pleas of the Pavlovskii not to shoot. In any event, their ammunition was spent and the streets were again in the hands of government forces, so the Pavlovskii drifted back to their barracks. One can suppose that they hoped thereby to avoid serious reprisals. A guard of Preobrazhenskii was posted around the barracks (under the command of the same Timichenko-Ruban), and that night twenty or so "instigators" were arrested and marched off to the Peter Paul Fortress. So far as can be determined, this incident did not become known to most other units and therefore was not likely to have inspired the mutiny the following day, as is sometimes claimed, but it was symptomatic of the inner turmoil of garrison soldiers.



As is well known, it was the Volynskii Regiment that set off the avalanche of the twenty-seventh. Most of the accounts are based on Kirpichnikov, and, although there is no reason to doubt his accuracy, he quite naturally dresses up the episode in the

⁴¹ See Lukash, *Pavlovtsy* (Petrograd, 1917), pp. 6-7, and Shliapnikov, I, 165-66.

⁴² MS, "Stranitsy proshlogo," in RA.

rhetoric of a successful revolution. Much of what one would like to know of the thoughts and reactions of the men, the makeup of the units, and the extent of their awareness of outside events remains in obscurity. Kirpichnikov recounts a midnight meeting of the NCOs of his training unit after the officers had departed and the men were in their bunks. They agreed that under no circumstances would they carry out further punitive actions under the command of their officers, and that they should arouse the men an hour earlier the next morning to secure their assent. Supposedly this "sergeants' coup" was carried off smoothly: the men were lined up in the usual order, weapons and ammunition were distributed, and Kirpichnikov then addressed them, receiving affirmative response to his appeal that they obey his orders and not those of the officers. When Captain Lashkevich and his fellow officers arrived at seven o'clock to brief the men on the day's assignment, they faced a flawlessly organized revolt. On a prearranged signal, the men cried from the ranks: "We won't shoot!" Attempts to intimidate them by singling out individuals with threats were met with the ominous pounding of rifle butts on the floor. An appeal to the tsar's explicit order, the text of which was read, failed to produce the desired impression, and the officers, finally sensing their danger, hastily withdrew. This display of officer helplessness apparently cut loose the inner restraints that had hitherto kept the disobedience within orderly channels. The men rushed to the windows and pursued the retreating officers with taunts and catcalls—and Captain Lashkevich was felled by a rifle shot as he crossed the barracks enclosure in the deep snow.

From this point on, the revolt became a disorderly, improvised affair, and can hardly be reconstructed in consecutive order. It is unlikely that the sergeants were providing anything but the most elementary leadership. They could shout orders or suggestions, but the soldiers responded according to their own lights. Hastily dispatched emissaries had no difficulty in persuading other companies of the reserve battalion to follow suit, once it was clear that the officers had been faced down. The fact of the revolt was advertised to the surrounding area by random firing into the air and loud cheers. It was a key circumstance that the Volynskii shared a huge brick quadrangle and a common court with two other guards units, the Litovskii and part of the Preobrazhenskii (these were the peacetime barracks of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment), their respective areas being separated only by low wooden fences.

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These units therefore were direct witnesses to the commotion taking place next door and soon followed suit. Raids on the Litovskii arms chamber, it is said, yielded over a thousand rifles, four machine guns, and thirty thousand rounds of ammunition. This armed human mass spilled out into the streets of Petrograd at an hour when neither the demonstrators nor the police were out in force. Thus some twenty thousand leaderless but high-spirited and well-armed soldiers transformed the demonstrations into an insurrection.⁴³

From a strategic point of view, the government forces had received an irreparable blow. The Preobrazhenskii barracks were located in the same quarter—between Liteinyi Prospect and a bend in the Neva upstream from the Winter Palace—that enclosed a vast complex of military institutions, arms factories, barracks, and arsenals. According to S. Mstislavskii, a veteran member of the S.R. military organization and a librarian at the General Staff Academy, which was a part of this complex, his small group of officer-revolutionaries expected this quarter to be the “last redoubt” of government forces in the case of an uprising and doubted that it could be taken. Now, at one stroke, this entire area was effectively removed from the government’s control and its vast arms stores opened up to the insurgents. In short order the mutinying units brought out the Guards Sappers and the first battalion of the Marine Guards Equipage, and reduced to submission the arsenal of the Artillery Department; likewise, they liberated the prisoners in the House of Preliminary Detention (the Predvarylka, well known to revolutionaries) and subdued all police stations and the barracks of the Mounted Gendarme Division. The military schools, which might have added an element of strength loyal to the government, had not been mobilized during the crisis, and at the General Staff Academy classes were being conducted as usual when they were overtaken by the revolt.⁴⁴ Instead of trying

⁴³ See chiefly the series of high-flown narratives by I. Lukash, which appeared as pamphlets in Petrograd in 1917 in honor of the hero regiments: *Volyntsy*, *Preobrazhentsy*, *Litovtsy*, and *Pavlovtsy*. Otherwise one is dependent on fragmentary eyewitness accounts. Even Burdzhakov treats this incident lightly (*Vostanie*, pp. 185-88), taking fragments from unpublished accounts and passing quickly over to the Vyborg Side, which most Soviet accounts treat as the chief arena of events.

⁴⁴ All according to S. Mstislavskii (Maslovskii), *Piat' dnei. Nachalo i konets fevral'skoi revoliutsii* (Berlin, 1922), pp. 5-15. Mstislavskii was the

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to form themselves into some kind of organized units (whether any arms were available is of course an important question), these students and instructors of military science disbanded and went their separate ways. A number of loyal soldiers who had fled for refuge to the premises of the Academy thus had no choice but filter back out inconspicuously and blend with the street throngs. Among other things, the huge building of the regional court was set on fire, which announced to all of Petrograd that the center of the city was in the hands of insurgents.

According to Mstislavskii, so swift and complete was the reduction of this section of the city that by noon all firing had ceased, jubilation had set in, and armed crowds were pushing out to other areas. Captain Timichenko-Ruban arrived at the Preobrazhenskii barracks in the midst of this turmoil and, finding part of his company on the street with their sergeants, attempted to form them into ranks and march them to the Winter Palace (one suspects he was not perfectly frank about his own loyalties), but as his force of three hundred or so made its way along the Liteinyi, it was surrounded and dissolved by the crowds. It was a brave attempt indeed, and must have reflected considerable personal popularity, as a number of officers had come to grief by trying to remind their men of their oath of loyalty to the throne. As the crowds surged in a reverse direction toward the Aleksandrovskaia Bridge, Timichenko-Ruban was carried along with them unharmed, but apparently under mistrustful observation. When the crowds were met at the bridge by machine-gun fire (ascribed by him to units of the Guards Grenadiers), he was able to escape in the resulting confusion and make his way to the Palace Square.⁴⁵

Simultaneously, on the far side of the Neva in the Vyborg Side, a second uprising was taking place. Factory meetings were being held as usual from early morning, but there was a new note of urgency in the oratory, sounding the conviction that the resistance of the government forces must be overcome at once or the movement would be defeated. The Bolsheviks, who had the strongest organizational roots in the district, were under instructions to urge the workers to make a concerted effort to win over the soldiers

son of D. F. Maslovskii, a professor at the General Staff Academy, and for many years clandestinely carried out revolutionary work, unknown to his distinguished father. See Gerua, I, 127.

⁴⁵ Following MS, "Stranitsy proshlogo."

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and through them to obtain arms.⁴⁶ Whether they were persuaded by the Bolshevik orators or were simply following the logic of the situation, the worker-demonstrators did in fact mount an effort in the course of the morning to lift pickets and guard posts and to penetrate the barracks with written appeals or deputations. Several attempts to organize street meetings outside the barracks were broken up by machine-gun fire, which nearly caused the workers to give up the effort. But whether encouraged by news of the revolt on the opposite side or by their success in dissolving military units at several key locations, they persisted in their efforts. Soon they had accumulated enough weapons and soldier defectors to take over police stations, occupy the Finland Station, and liberate the recently arrested political prisoners in the Petrograd Prison of Solitary Confinement (the Kresty). By noon the quarter, except for the barracks of the Moskovskii Guards Regiment, the Bicycle Battalion, and the units guarding the Aleksandrovskii Bridge, was in their hands. Around one o'clock the soldier-mutineers from the Liteinyi district surged across the bridge, overwhelming the units guarding it. The two insurgent forces linked up, occupying a good third of the city and cutting the government forces off from all important reserves of ammunition, weapons, and military supplies (the Sestroretskii rifle factory, a few miles out along the Finland railroad line, the Patronyi Zavod [Ammunition Works], and the "New Arsenal," a huge weapons assembly and storage depot near the Aleksandrovskii Bridge).⁴⁷

What was occurring in other districts of the capital is less certain, although similar events were apparently taking place in the Narva Gate District, which included the giant Putilov works, and also on the Petrograd Side.⁴⁸ In the latter, all the government forces had disappeared from the streets when Shliapnikov freely crossed over from the Vyborg Side around mid-morning. Apparently they were concentrating on the defense of the Peter Paul Fortress, which commanded the key Palace and Troitskii bridges

⁴⁶ Shliapnikov, I, 134. Shliapnikov, as senior member of the Bureau of the Central Committee in Petrograd, was the one who gave these instructions.

⁴⁷ See Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, pp. 188-92, and Shliapnikov, I, chaps. 17 and 23.

⁴⁸ See Mints, I, 533. Police reports ceased on the 27th, and personal accounts seem to be lacking, except for a few brief pages in *Istoriia putilovskogo zavoda*, ed. M. Mitel'man et al. (Moscow, 1939), pp. 551-52.

and was strategically essential if the government were to rally its forces in the area of the Admiralty and the Winter Palace. Vasilevskii Island remained in the hands of loyal troops for most of the day, as demonstrators were unable to get past the pickets guarding the Bourse and Palace bridges, the route that would have to be taken from the Petrograd Side to the center via Vasilevskii Island. Government officials were passing through these lines on their way to their respective bureaus as on a normal working day, but as they crossed the Neva the awesome column of smoke rising from the regional court building gave them food for thought.⁴⁹

The insurgent forces tried again in mid-afternoon to penetrate the barracks of the Moskovskii Regiment, but the officers and part of the training unit offered stiff resistance. With the aid of soldiers of the regiment who had joined the rebels on the streets, the gates were broken down, and after a short battle in the inner court during which the commander and several officers of the defending forces were killed, the entire regiment came over to the insurgent side. More guns and weapons were passed out freely to the demonstrators. Thereafter the soldiers and demonstrators made for the barracks of the Cycle Battalion, where an organized defense and prolonged siege took place. The affair ended only on the following day when the barracks were set on fire. Again, bloody reprisals were taken against the defending forces.⁵⁰ By this time, the armored car and automobile units had come over to the insurgent side, and these became the mobile force with which pockets of resistance were broken up. From this point on, in the area of rebel control the uprising took the form of arresting and disarming officers on the street, searching apartments for weapons, lynching policemen, and clearing out real or imagined machine-gun nests.



The government forces scarcely had an opportunity to react to the rapid succession of crises and were at a severe disadvantage from the very outset. General Khabalov was informed of the Volynskii mutiny promptly at seven in the morning, but received his first shock of the day when Colonel Pavlenko, who had just

⁴⁹ See Shliapnikov, I, 140-41.

⁵⁰ See the interesting account of a nonparty soldier of the Moskovskii Guards Regiment in the collection *Bolshevizatsiia petrogradskago garnizona v 1917 godu. Sbornik materialov i dokumentov*, ed. A. K. Drezen (Leningrad, 1932), pp. 25-28.

been appointed to replace the ailing General Chebykin as commander of operations, also reported himself ill. Colonel Mikhailenko of the Moskovskii Regiment was appointed to replace him. Apparently Khabalov made a round of desperate telephone calls to various barracks to send loyal units to the Palace Square; by nine o'clock six companies had shown up, consisting of two companies of Preobrazhenskii (from the nearby Milonnaia barracks, not those involved in the uprising), one each from the Keksgolmskii and the Guards Rifle regiments, and squadrons of the Guards Dragoons and the Ninth Cavalry Regiment.⁵¹ They were put under the command of a Colonel Kutepov, a decorated hero who had just arrived from the front.

Kutepov, who had no idea of the mood of his troops or of the situation he would be facing, was ordered to proceed to the Liteinyi and restore order in the district. He apparently arrived at the height of the uprising, around ten o'clock, as he found a mob of soldiers milling in the streets still uncertain as to just how far they intended to carry their mutiny. Sensing their uncertainty, Kutepov attempted to sway the soldier mass with oratory, accusing those who had incited the mutiny of being traitors and friends of Germany. He felt that he had made a good impression, and he ventured so far as to persuade them that if they marched back to their barracks under his command they would not be court-martialed and shot. In a scene that was to be repeated frequently in the coming days, the effect of his oratory was instantaneously dissipated by a few angry shouts from the crowd ("He's lying! They'll shoot you!" "It's a trick!") and renewed gunfire. Kutepov found it difficult to keep his own detachment together, let alone bring the crowd under control. He decided that he could not proceed without reinforcements, and while he was fruitlessly engaged in trying to contact Khabalov by telephone—who, without Kutepov's knowledge, had moved his headquarters from the city commandant's office to the General Staff Administration on the Palace Square—his troops melted away under the shouts of the crowd.⁵²

Complete panic seems to have reigned at Khabalov's headquarters. A Preobrazhenskii officer who wished to report that his company had arrived recounts how Khabalov screamed at him for not ordering his men to shoot and issued a hysterical order for air-

⁵¹ *PTsR*, I, 198 (Khabalov).

⁵² See *ibid.*, and Kutepov's own account, "Pervye dni revoliutsii v Petrograde," in *General Kutepov. Sbornik statei* (Paris, 1934), pp. 169ff.

planes to be called in to bomb the capital. When the Preobrazhenskii officer himself countermanded the order in Khabalov's presence, the latter did not object but asked what the insubordinate captain would suggest. City Prefect General Balk, the captain claimed, was seized with "an uncontrollable, senseless laughter of the kind that affects people in fires and earthquakes."⁵³ Khabalov's discomfiture had already been apparent the evening before, when he gave a confused report on the day's events to the Council of Ministers, and Prince Golitsyn had instructed War Minister Beliaev to find a replacement (an illegal act, since the military district was subordinated directly to the Commander in Chief and not to the War Minister). In his deposition to the Extraordinary Investigative Commission, Khabalov declared that after Kutepov's departure three companies each arrived from the Egerskii and Izmailovskii Guards regiments, and another of Preobrazhenskii, the latter without ammunition; other units, such as the 181st Infantry and the Finland Guards regiments reported that the mood of their men was too uncertain to risk bringing them out on the streets. Shortly thereafter, the telephone exchange was occupied by the insurgents, and Khabalov's communication with other parts of the garrison ceased.

General A. P. Budberg, who had just arrived in the capital from the front, was a witness to the state of the defending forces at this juncture. Having heard of the government's precarious position, he decided to report to the General Staff Administration to offer his services. As he crossed the huge Palace Square (the General Staff was opposite the palace across the Square), he observed the units that were lined up there, which he identified (probably erroneously) as Finlandskii and Grenadier Guards. "I was immediately shaken with bitter memories of 1905," he states (he had then been a garrison commander at Vladivostok), "the same faces, the same bitter, furtive glances, the same tense atmosphere, the same sensation of outside forces at work."⁵⁴ The officers, all raw youths, looked uneasy and distracted. He thought it his duty to report his observations directly to the War Minister, but the latter surprised him with his cheery optimism. Generals Chebykin and Anosov had vouched for the dependability of the garrison, Beliaev assured him, and measures had been taken; once the "idiotic Duma" was out of the way, the ferment would cease. At this point Grand Duke

⁵³ According to Lukash, *Preobrazhentsy*, p. 15.

⁵⁴ MS, "Vospominaniia o voine 1914-1917 g.g.," HI, pp. 939-40.

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Cyril arrived to offer the services of the Marine Guards Equipage, but Khabalov informed him that he had no jurisdiction over them, presumably because they were assigned to guard royal personages; it was a fruitless gesture anyway, as the grand duke's battalions joined the mutiny, the first battalion having done so even before the offer was made, and the second and third battalions, which were stationed in Tsarskoe, following suit the next day. General Danilchenko suggested calling out the military schools (already beyond their reach), but Khabalov refused, stating that he had explicit orders from the tsar not to employ them in street disturbances.

Of confusion and bad luck there seemed to be no end. General Danilchenko was put in command of a force consisting of his own Izmailovskiis, part of the Ninth Cavalry, and artillery units called in from the Strelna Fortress (near Oranienbaum) and was ordered to occupy the Admiralty, from which vantage point he was to aid in the defense of the Winter Palace (just across the Nevskii). Artillery units called in from Peterhof refused to entrain; a machine-gun unit dispatched by General Gulevich from a garrison across the Finnish border was halted by striking railroad workers; batteries from the nearby Artillery School, the only ones readily available, were without shell. Later, machine-gun officers from the Oranienbaum Machine Gun School and two companies of the Petrograd Guards Regiment joined them. Danilchenko complained to Khabalov that his forces could not defend the Winter Palace from the Admiralty and demanded that they occupy the Winter Palace itself. Khabalov consented and appointed him full commandant of the defending forces, replacing Mikhailenko, who was the third in this capacity to take sick within twenty-four hours. Colonel Fomin, Danilchenko's second in command, objected strenuously to the new disposition, arguing that the center of the city was no longer defensible and that they should occupy Pulkovo Heights outside the city to link up with forces from Tsarskoe Selo. Both were shocked when Khabalov completely lost his presence of mind while addressing the troops and was obliged to break off. Around midday, General Beliaev informed Khabalov that he was being relieved of his command by General Zankevich. At the same time he replaced General Danilchenko with Colonel Fomin as commandant, since the former had fallen victim to the commanders' epidemic.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ In addition to the versions of Danilchenko, Khabalov, and Beliaev,

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By this time the Palace Square was occupied by two companies of Preobrazhenskii, most of the Pavlovskii Regiment (six thousand, according to Lukash's account), a single detachment of the Marine Equipage, and assorted smaller units. But they had been summoned not by Khabalov but by a group of Preobrazhenskii officers who had made the rounds of the guards barracks by automobile. Their intention was not to reinforce Khabalov, but to assemble elements willing to force the government to reconvene the Duma and form a new government of public confidence.⁵⁶ Assuming that they were loyal, the defending commanders ordered them to enter the Winter Palace, which they did, but as the hours wore on and nothing happened, the soldiers began to feel that they had been betrayed and demanded that their officers lead them out again. By evening they had all left.

The loyal forces were rapidly dwindling. The Guards Cavalry units pulled out against the orders of their officers and headed for their reserve headquarters in Novgorod from whence they had been summoned; a company commander of the Izmailovskii asked to be removed, as he feared his men were about to lynch him; and the artillery officers from Strelna announced that their men were restive and unlikely to carry out further orders. As ridiculous as it seems, the loyal force was low on ammunition and had no prospect of acquiring more, since the insurgents controlled all important depots.⁵⁷ Grand Duke Michael Aleksandrovich, who was the sole member of the royal family present, pleaded with the military commanders not to stage their defense at the palace, as the result could only be the destruction of its vast art treasures and historical monuments.

Strategically, the best decision at this point would have been to link up with the defending forces at the Peter Paul Fortress, but the bridges were now occupied by rebel forces with armored cars. Khabalov claims that he favored pushing through, but that General Zankevich decided otherwise on the grounds that the Izmailovskii officers would defect!⁵⁸ Thus at 5:00 A.M. on February 28 the minuscule defending force, two thousand in all, consisting

see Col. B. V. Fomin, "Vospominaniia o fevral'skoi revoliutsii 1917 goda," *Izmailovskaia Starina*, xvii (1933), 34 and passim.

⁵⁶ See Lukash, *Preobrazhentsy*, pp. 12-17.

⁵⁷ Details are mainly from Fomin and Danilchenko. On the last point, see Khabalov, in *PTsR*, I, 200-201.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

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largely of Izmailovskii and Egers, evacuated the Winter Palace and returned to the Admiralty. They had no reserves of ammunition, no food for the men, no hay for the horses. Beliaev apparently learned of the resignation of the Council of Ministers and the assumption of power by the Temporary Committee of the Duma, and around noon on the twenty-eighth he ordered the occupying forces to dissolve and return to their respective barracks, never having fired a shot.⁵⁹



Such was the finale of the efforts to stem the tide of revolution in the capital. The rapid demise of the government forces was reflected in the increasingly dispirited communications of the defending commanders. Beliaev had finally conceded to Stavka at seven o'clock the previous evening (the twenty-seventh) the true magnitude of the revolt:

The situation in Petrograd has become quite serious. The armed rebellion for the time being cannot be put down by the few remaining loyal units; on the contrary, many units are going over to the rebels. . . . The speedy arrival of genuinely loyal units is necessary, and in sufficient quantity for simultaneous operations in different quarters of the city.⁶⁰

At ten o'clock Khabalov followed it up with the acknowledgment to his sovereign that "I am unable to execute the command to restore order in the capital." He still misrepresented the situation as a genuine battle between loyal and rebel elements in the course of which loyal forces had suffered heavy casualties.⁶¹ The frankest and best-informed assessment on the government side came from an unidentified naval officer in a report to Fleet Admiral Rusin in Helsinki:

The situation by evening is as follows: Rebel forces have taken over the Vyborg Side and the entire section of the city from the Liteinyi [Prospect] to Smolnyi [Institute—upstream by the Neva] and from there along the Suvorov and Spasskii [boulevards]. There are now reports of shooting on the Petrograd Side. The Seniorien Convent of the State Duma, on the

⁵⁹ Details are mainly from Khabalov and Fomin, but see also remarks by Beliaev, in *PTsR*, II, 227.

⁶⁰ Text in *KA*, XXI (1927), 9.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

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request of delegates from the rebels, have chosen a committee to restore order in the capital and for communications with institutions and persons. It is doubtful that this can pacify the crowds. The troops go over to the rebels easily. On the streets officers are being disarmed. The mobs commandeer automobiles at will—among them that of your Excellency. Beliaev has taken command, but in view of what has transpired he will scarcely succeed. . . . In the city there are no more guards posted, the hooligans are looting, the semaphore signals are torn up, and the trains are not running. . . . There are signs that the rebels have no definite plans, but a certain organization is noticeable—for example, the whole section of Liteinyi and Tauride Palace is posted with their guards.⁶²

At eight o'clock the following morning Khabalov wired Stavka the pathetic report: "The number of those remaining true to their oath has decreased to six hundred men infantry and five hundred mounted, with fifteen machine guns and twelve artillery pieces with eighty shell. The situation is extraordinarily difficult."⁶³ Even more pathetic was his reply a few hours later to a ten-point inquiry by Stavka: (1) Q: How many units maintain order, what disorders? A: "In my disposition at the Admiralty are four guards companies, five cavalry squadrons, two batteries; all other troops have either joined the rebels or by agreement with them remain neutral. Individual soldiers and groups wander about the city shooting at passers-by and disarming officers." (2) Q: Railroad stations? A: "All railroad stations are in the hands of the revolutionaries and are strictly guarded by them." (3) Q: What parts of the city do you control? A: "The entire city is in their hands, the telephones are out of order, and there are no communications with the outside." (4) Q: Who is maintaining order in these sections? A: "I am unable to answer." (5) Q: Are ministers functioning normally? A: "The ministers have been arrested by the revolutionaries." (6) Q: Police forces? A: "They have ceased to exist." (7) Q: What control over technical and supply institutions? A: "None." (8) Q: Quantity of food provisions? A: "I have none at my disposal. On the twenty-fifth there were 5,600,000 poods of flour in the city." (9) Q: What weapons, artillery, military supplies have fallen into the hands of the revolu-

⁶² Ibid., p. 14.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 19.

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tionaries? A: "All artillery institutions are in the hands of the revolutionaries." (10) Q: What military authorities and staffs are at your disposal? A: "At my disposal is the chief of staff of the military district [Zankevich?]; with other military administrations I have no ties whatsoever."⁶⁴



It is obvious from the foregoing account that the government forces had lost to the rebels simultaneously with the mutiny in the Liteinyi and Vyborg districts and never succeeded in regaining the initiative. It is a dreary tale of lack of foresight, utterly incompetent leadership, and greatly disproportionate odds. Émigré memoirs and scholarly works lament that had matters been in the hands of energetic commanders, had the staff work prior to the revolt been up to par, or had certain factors been otherwise, the outcome might have been different. Such opinions are hardly surprising on the part of those bred in the old military traditions and the idea of the monarchy. However, it is surprising that such arguments should be vigorously advanced by so serious a contemporary historian as Professor Katkov in his monograph on the February Revolution. He upholds the brave commander of the Cycle Battalion, who maintained the loyalty and fighting capacity of his men for a full twenty-four hours after the outbreak of the mutiny, as an example of what "a determined and popular officer could have done if the commander at the headquarters of the Petrograd garrison had been less disoriented." And he couples this with Sukhanov's statement (and he was not the only one to make this assertion) that on the evening of the twenty-seventh the mutineers would have been helpless against any organized force, the tragedy being that "Tsarism had no such organized force."⁶⁵

The historian, however, cannot attribute decisive significance to fortuitous circumstances or speculate on hypothetical variations of the actual facts. The evidence presented here should substantiate that there were deep and unalterable historical reasons both for the mass defection of the troops and for the inefficacy of the most

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

⁶⁵ See Katkov, pp. 275, 281, and *passim*. Despite a facade of erudition, Katkov habitually strains the evidence to buttress his unapologetic defense of pure autocracy. Facts, even trivia, serve as the launching point for excessively conspiratorial explanations of phenomena that are in fact perfectly comprehensible social reactions.

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heroic efforts of energetic officers to give more than a few hours reprieve to the failing government. In effect, to assume that at this juncture there could have been energetic leadership that could have led to an opposite result would be to ignore all the deep-seated social and political reasons that led to the isolation of the monarchy, the deterioration of the quality of its leadership, the enervation of its will to survive, and the alienation of all the important social groups, including those that made up the mechanism of institutional support for the autocracy.

Katkov's point is well taken that even during the mutiny many soldiers displayed ambivalent attitudes and would by no means have been an effective fighting force if faced with disciplined units. As stated before, conflicting motivations during the crisis do not find expression in the documentation, but reasonable conclusions can be inferred nevertheless. The first, of course, was fear of harsh reprisals in case the mutiny should be defeated, and here peasant- and worker-soldiers had a vast fund of historical experience to draw upon. However, there was also evident reluctance on the part of many to go against the code of military discipline, and this cannot simply be attributed to awe before the symbols of tsarist authority. The professionalism and patriotism of conscientious officers could and quite often did inspire respect in their men, particularly at the company level, and also on the part of regimental commanders.⁶⁶ One should note, however, that such officers represented a rather small minority, as the great majority looked on garrison duty as a respite or refuge from the hardships of the front and left the day-to-day problems of coping with the disorganized mass of recruits to NCOs. Evidence of the reluctance to go against respected officers can be seen in numerous accounts of apologies to officers for disobeying, friendly warnings, or actual protection against lynching crowds.⁶⁷ Many of the units that turned up at the Winter Palace or that declared their "neutrality" undoubtedly did so out of deference to such officers. But this did

⁶⁶ Col. Ekstrom, commander of the Pavlovskii Regiment, was quite popular with his men, and, according to Lukash (*Pavlovtsy*, p. 8), successfully calmed them after the incident of the twenty-sixth on the Moika, only to be foully murdered on the street afterwards by angry demonstrators. The commanders of the Moskovskii and Izamilovskii regiments also enjoyed such a reputation and were "reelected" to their posts after the Revolution, albeit only briefly.

⁶⁷ For example, see Stankevich, pp. 66-67.

not necessarily insulate them from the influences that inclined the soldiers generally to the side of revolt. Even with excellent leadership it is doubtful that the forces that showed up at the Palace Square could have been molded into a fighting force, as the example of Captain Kutepov so eloquently shows. Many of the units were there by either misunderstanding or the inertia of obedience to command, and they would not under any circumstances have carried out orders to shoot at fellow soldiers on the rebel side. They could be held there only to the extent that they were ignorant of developments elsewhere in the city, and most of them departed as soon as they were better informed.

Of the psychological factors that might have restrained the soldiers from mutiny, one was certainly no longer effectual, namely, the traditional awe before the person of the tsar. The Rasputin scandal and the rumors of German influence on the tsarina had effectively eroded the last remaining barriers that had hitherto exempted the person of the tsar from the rage directed toward the ministers, the generals, the police, the war, and the shortage of bread. Occasionally the tsar was defended as a well-intentioned but weak person, but the tsarina, who was known to dominate her husband, had indelibly become "that German woman." Proof of the erosion of the prestige of the crown came when appeals to the soldiers to observe the oath of loyalty to the tsar were almost totally ignored in the February days.

Whatever the restraining impulses still intact, they could do no more than delay the process of mass defection, and not in a single instance did they lead to anything like determined resistance. Those few units that actively resisted the rebel forces were training units organized by a few energetic officers before the full impact of the revolt could be felt. An explanation for their resistance is not too difficult to find, for these units consisted primarily of men transferred from the front, who had been recommended by their officers for training as NCOs. This means that they were to some extent motivated by a sense of duty and an ambition to advance in the army. Thus a breach of discipline went strongly against their interests and values (as NCOs, of course, the support payments to their families would be correspondingly greater). Still, they were not immune to the disaffection in the rest of the country, and their special role during the demonstrations was a most unwelcome one. If the Pavlovskii and Moskovskii training units remained subordinate and carried out orders to shoot, the same orders had the

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opposite effect on other training units, driving them as an organized force over to the side of the revolt. The example of Kirpichnikov's training company was decisive in demonstrating to fellow soldiers that the repressive force they feared most now sided with the people, and it opened the floodgates for the rest of the garrison.

If the training units were the chief potential source of support for the government, other categories of garrison soldiers offset this advantage by the depth of their alienation. The most important of these were the recuperating evacuees (those who had recovered from wounds and illnesses and who were being reassigned to marching companies, usually composing one full company out of the four in reserve units). These soldiers had tasted to the full the bitter dregs of war at the front and were not disposed to return. Hardened by their experiences, they were hostile to discipline and contemptuous of officers as a class. Some of them had been exposed to revolutionary and antiwar propaganda in the hospitals, where surveillance was at a minimum and idle time was spent swapping rumors and stories of Rasputin and the German element. The evacuees enjoyed the reputation of being particularly hostile to barracks routine and training duties, and most officers left them in peace.⁶⁸

Of the new recruits, the most bitter were the over-forties, who had left households behind them in the charge of women and old folks. They were agitated by a pervasive fear that their holdings would be easy prey to the village *kulaks* and *miroeds*, who in their absence dominated the village assemblies, as well as to speculators and venal food supply officials. The desertion rate among this category was extraordinarily high, and they positively revolted at the idea of being sent to the front. How large an element this was in the Petrograd garrison is not subject to precise determination, but it was sizable enough to attract commentary (as an element of "bad luck" for the government). Several authorities, both Soviet and émigré, maintain that a large number of new recruits in the guards regiments were workers from the capital who had lost their exempt status owing to participation in strikes. Thus they supposedly had direct contacts with the workers and were a conduit of the latter's rebellious impulses into the barracks milieu. In certain types of units, such as the automobile and armored car units, the predominance of the worker element is more than a conjec-

⁶⁸ For a general characterization, see Sobolev, *IZ*, LXXXVIII, 84.

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ture, and these units did play an important role in the rebellion. The same was true of the Guards Sappers, the Marine Guards Equipage, and the Oranienbaum Machine Gunners. Although a recent Soviet study based on archival data confirms that no substantial change took place in the recruitment patterns into the guards regiments, which, as traditionally practiced, drew from rural regions, the regular infantry regiments (five in all) were drawing recruits exclusively from regions around the capital and thus reflected the urban population structure. Although the share of industrial workers is not strikingly large (3.5 percent), when one adds construction workers (6 percent), petty craftsmen (22 percent), and manual laborers (18.2 percent), it amounts to a total of almost 50 percent, well above the typical 30 percent share of prewar times. The purely agricultural category was represented by a mere 34 percent, as compared with the prewar, nationwide average of 61 percent. Moreover, a goodly number of soldiers in these regiments (four thousand out of nearly forty thousand) were detailed to work in arms assembly plants or to perform guard duty there, and were thus in daily contact with civilian workers.⁶⁹ Similarly, it is significant that some of the reserve infantrymen could not be housed in barracks and were quartered with working-class families on the Vyborg Side.⁷⁰ One can presume, therefore, that the regular infantry units were in tune with the mood of the lower-class urban populace and felt thoroughly at home on the streets of Petrograd.

Thus, one is safe in concluding that the garrison troops could not possibly have been depended upon in any crisis to serve as a force for the suppression of disorders, and it was the particular blindness of those in authority that they continued to reckon on them. Anyone inclined to think otherwise should contemplate the pitiful remnant of a thousand men cooped up in the Admiralty by midday of the twenty-eighth, and even they were becoming restive. Of that small handful of the autocracy's servants in whose frail hands the last defense of the sinking empire remained, it is perhaps best to say: "Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad."

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 81.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, and Budberg, p. 943.

CHAPTER V



THE FOUNDING OF SOLDIER POWER

ALTHOUGH IT WAS only one of the important components of the February Revolution, the Great Mutiny of February 27 and 28 in Petrograd furnished the impetus that accomplished the total political revolution and precluded a settlement based on compromise with the autocracy. Suddenly the power of the autocracy counted for nothing, and an awesome new force was placed on the balance—a tumultuous, unbridled, but armed soldiery several hundred thousand strong. Their officers for the most part disappeared in the first few hours in the interest of their own safety, except for a small number who went with the current and led the troops in carrying out revolutionary actions. At first confused and frightened by their own daring, the soldiers soon came under the influence of street agitators—students, workers, liberated prisoners, socialist intellectuals, and party members—who assured them of the righteousness of their exploit on behalf of freedom, and as a consequence they quickly developed a sense of their historic role and inherent power. The further course of events served to entrench this consciousness ever more firmly, as the various competitors for power entreated, flattered, cajoled, and sought to overawe them in order to harness this new force for their own political designs.

In the ensuing days the competition between the Petrograd Soviet and the Temporary Committee of the Duma primarily took the form of efforts to gain influence over the garrison troops. Once the mutiny had effectively demolished autocratic authority, it was inevitable that a political center of some kind would have to fill the vacuum, and, just as inevitably, the revolutionized soldiery would have to become an institutionalized part of it. The cardinal development of the new post-February order was the swift trans-

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formation of a leaderless soldier mob into a self-conscious, semi-autonomous political force with its own forms of organization and revolutionary values, which expressed its determination never again to be an obedient tool of superimposed authority. Although the Soviet rather than the Provisional Government won the contest for the soldiers' loyalty, in order to maintain its influence it was often obliged to cater to soldiers' whims and caprices and to act as a conduit of their demands on the government and the military establishment. So long as the Soviet leadership correctly read the soldiers' sentiments, its position vis-à-vis the Provisional Government and any potential counterrevolution was unassailable; but when it began to pursue policies that ignored its constituents, as in joining the Coalition Government and endorsing the summer offensive, its position of strength rapidly declined. The unique position of the soldiery in the new constellation of power was eventually to extend to provincial garrisons and the front, but nowhere was the presence of a politicized soldier mass so overwhelming as in the capital, where it could and did affect the day-to-day functioning of the organs of power.

Though this influence was most direct and obvious in Petrograd, it is more accurate to view it as concentrated in those northern urban and naval centers within striking distance of the capital, including the immediate military suburbs of Kronshtadt, Tsarskoe, Oranienbaum, and Vyborg, and also Helsingfors, Reval, Pskov, Dvinsk, and Riga, an area that inner circles of the Provisional Government bitterly referred to as "the rotten triangle." Here the overturn of military authority had been most complete, the drama of participation in revolutionary events most vivid, and the persistent, radicalizing effect of interaction with workers and antiwar socialist groups most profound. In this area were located approximately 850,000 garrison troops, two major front armies (the First and the Twelfth, covering the shores of the Finnish Gulf and Riga, respectively), and four major naval centers with a command of 63,000 men.¹ The upheaval in the naval centers was particu-

¹ According to Iakupov (pp. 37-39), whose estimates inspire the most confidence, the Petrograd Military District, which included Finland and Estonia (and hence the garrisons of Helsingfors, Reval, Vyborg, etc.), numbered 466,800 soldiers, while an additional 384,521 were in garrisons attached to the Northern Front. There were garrisons of 130,000 in Reval, 30,000 in Pskov, and 34,000 in Dvinsk; 75,000 soldiers were attached to fortresses and naval bases surrounding the Finnish Gulf. Burdzhakov gives

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larly violent, accounting for well over two-thirds of the cases of officer lynchings in the first few days; moreover, the concentration of politically indoctrinated sailors and ex-workers with vivid memories of 1905 was particularly high. These centers became the bastions of Bolshevik influence from the very outset, and neither the commanding staff nor the Provisional Government ever established authority over them; in effect, the October Revolution occurred in the Baltic fleet in March. The soldiers and sailors of the rotten triangle were indeed the palace guard of the new revolutionary order.



The present chapter will attempt to give a coherent account of the transformation of the masses of disorganized, mutineering soldiers into an institutionalized force in the post-February structure of power. On the first day of the Revolution, the twenty-seventh, the great mass of soldiers who streamed out of their barracks into the street ceased to exist as organized units. They first surged with the street crowds over the major government strong points (the arsenal, the Artillery Administration, police and railway stations, the barracks of units still holding out), but in the course of the day they broke up into aimless groups with uncertain objectives. Some lent themselves to improvised revolutionary actions under the leadership of students, workers, or noncommissioned officers, such as disarming officers on the street, cleaning out real or imagined police nests on the rooftops, and searching apartments for weapons and fugitive policemen. Others, unarmed, wandered about aimlessly, hid out in momentary panic, or broke into wine cellars and became hopelessly drunk. Gunfire, most of it occasioned by panic or sheer joy, was heard all over the city. Streets filled with jubilant crowds were suddenly emptied by unexplained shots, which the knowing attributed to machine-gun nests on the rooftops. Rifles were aimed skyward and fired at cornices and upper-story windows whether the enemy was visible or not. Soldiers and revolutionary bands commandeered every available auto and truck, draping them with red banners and perching on the fenders and running boards as they sped aimlessly through the city.

a figure of 80,000 soldiers and sailors in Kronshtadt. *Vtoraia russkaia revoliutsiia. Moskva, front, periferiia* (Moscow, 1971), p. 107 (hereafter cited as *Moskva, front*).

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Obviously such a fragmentized mass, however preponderant temporarily, would not be able to hold out for long against a disciplined punitive expedition from the front. A revolution cannot sustain itself without a political center, an apparatus of authority of its own to challenge and replace the old authority. At the moment of the outbreak the logical symbol of counterauthority was the Tauride Palace, the seat of the State Duma. Though most of the staid members of the Duma, who had been elected on the basis of the very restricted franchise of the law of June 3, 1907, were in anything but a revolutionary frame of mind, they had become a symbol of opposition to the autocracy through their known hostility to the Rasputin influence and the existing government. The revolutionary parties, which had been largely immobilized during the war, had no such comparable, visible institutional base, except through their own handful of Duma deputies. The names of Kerensky, Chkheidze, and Skobelev were known to the public through their bold speeches in the Duma, which circulated via newspapers or in unexpurgated underground versions.

Two circumstances drew the reluctant Duma leaders into the maelstrom of events during the first hours of the uprising. First, the Duma had been in session since February 14 and was scheduled to meet at 3:00 P.M. on the day of the mutiny; however, the members were greeted on their arrival with the order of suspension that Premier Prince Golitsyn had signed late the previous evening. Thus, in the midst of the uprising they were obliged to decide whether to remain in session in defiance of the order and attempt to bring the raging elements under their control, or to hold to the path of legality and disband. Either course was politically a risky one: in the first case, should the revolt eventually be crushed, the Duma would surely suffer reprisals and cease to exist; in the second, they would lose all prestige and claim to leadership with the masses, and would likely be treated to endless charges of counterrevolutionary designs by whatever revolutionary authority took control.

The second circumstance forcing them into action was that the Tauride Palace was located in the very center of the quarter affected by the uprising. The Volynskii and Preobrazhenskii barracks were on the opposite side of the vast Tauride Garden behind the palace. The armed crowds were between the palace and the major boulevards and bridges, and beyond the palace to the other side was the Neva. Many of the deputies witnessed the turbulence

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in the streets as they made their way toward the Tauride. Those with no stomach for revolution arrived in a very shaken condition and looked helplessly to the deputies of the Left for enlightenment.² At midday the chairman of the Duma, Rodzianko, was still desperately trying by telergaph to obtain the tsar's reversal of the order to disperse, leaving his deputies to wander through the halls of the palace and feed on rumors.³ Many deputies, even some on the Right, were impatient with the inactivity of their chairman and expressed a desire to intervene decisively in events. But only the deputies on the Left, along with N. V. Nekrasov (a Left Kadet and vice-chairman of the Duma) and I. N. Efremov (Progressist), were willing to take the initiative without the chairman. They envisioned remaining in session illegally, swearing a "tennis court oath" of sorts, and appealing to the revolting troops and workers to recognize the supreme authority of the Duma.⁴ Kerensky's attempt to convene the Duma in Rodzianko's absence by ringing the official bell himself failed to sway the deputies.

Around 11:00 A.M. the Left deputies persuaded the Duma's Council of Elders (a sort of informal steering committee composed of party leaders) to assemble for an "unofficial" discussion of events under Nekrasov's chairmanship. When Rodzianko emerged from his cabinet, he demanded to know who had called the Council of Elders without his knowledge.⁵ Rodzianko was understandably alarmed, as this step ran counter to his own strategy of adhering to legality, hoping that the prospect of anarchy would frighten the tsar into conceding to a Duma-based government. Nevertheless, he consented to chair a continuation of the discussions. Again the impulse to action collided with the reluctance to embark on a "revolutionary" path. A solution was found by calling an "unofficial" session of the Duma outside the Duma chamber for 2:30 in the afternoon. Here the same ambivalence toward the logical alternatives was evident. Even Rodzianko and Miliukov were bereft of any special wisdom.⁶ Though most of

² According to Kerensky, *The Catastrophe: Kerensky's Own Story of the Russian Revolution* (New York, 1927), pp. 10-11.

³ See M. V. Rodzianko, "Gosudarstvennaia Duma," *Arkhir Russkoi Revoliutsii*, VI, 57, and other accounts.

⁴ Skobelev has given his own brief account in "Gibel' tsarizma. Vospominaniia M. I. Skobeleva," *Ogonek*, Mar. 13, 1927, and Burdzhakov cites Nekrasov's unpublished account in *Vosstanie*, p. 228.

⁵ According to Skobelev, *op. cit.*

⁶ Rodzianko declared that "we cannot express ourselves definitively, be-

the concrete suggestions entailed the assumption of de facto state authority and the removal of the tsar's cabinet (cheers are recorded for this suggestion), the final decision, to empower the formation of a "special committee" from existing party groups to come up with a solution, was a temporizing one. Even the very title of the "Temporary Committee of Members [*sic*] of the State Duma for the Restoration of Order and for Communications between Persons and Institutions" suggests the calculated ambiguity of its tasks and the anxiety not to arrogate to itself (as yet) formal state functions. It is clear, however, that the Duma members had no intention of violating the letter of the tsar's formal order of dispersal and thus burn their bridges behind them. The efforts of the Left to *push* the "bourgeoisie" onto the path of 1789 had failed.⁷

The Duma, on Rodzianko's insistence, continued to play the card of formal legality for the rest of the day. The Temporary Committee met with Grand Duke Michael Alekandrovich and tried to persuade him to assume sovereign powers in the capital until Nicholas could be persuaded to appoint a government enjoying public confidence. The project failed when Michael refused to proceed without the prior approval of the tsar. Another exchange of telegrams with Stavka brought another laconic refusal from Nicholas.⁸ As the despondent Duma leaders made their way from the Mariinskii Palace, where the negotiations took place late that evening, they were obliged every few steps to pass through posts of soldiers who demanded to see their "credentials." Apparently,

cause the correlation of forces is not yet known to us"; Miliukov, delineating the alternatives in true professorial style, concluded that "personally, I have no concrete suggestion." See *RPG*, I, 45, which reproduces the complete protocol of the session.

⁷ See the account of the day's events in *IzZh*, no. 1 (Feb. 27, 1917). This sheet of the Petrograd journalists is an indispensable source for these critical days, since all the major newspapers suspended publication; but that it inaccurately represented this basic point (perhaps not without an urge to influence the situation) is confirmed by Vasilii Shulgin, who cites the exact text of the resolution: "In compliance with the imperial ukaz to disperse, the State Duma is regarded as no longer functioning, but the members are not to go their separate ways, but to gather immediately for a private conference." Shulgin, *Dni* (Belgrad, 1925), p. 157. See also Miliukov, *Vospominaniia*, II, 292-93.

⁸ See M. V. Rodzianko, *Arkhiv Russkoi Revoliutsii*, VI, 57, and *KA*, XXI, 6-7.

assurances that they were officials of the Duma and not of the "old government" secured their safe passage.⁹

If the Duma leaders hoped to keep open their second option of putting themselves at the head of the revolting troops and creating a new power, they had allowed many precious hours to slip by. Fortunately for them, part of their prestige had been rescued by the frenzied efforts of Kerensky, with some assistance from other members of the Left. From the moment he heard the news, Kerensky was convinced that the historic moment had arrived and that the Duma must proclaim a glorious national revolution uniting all classes of society against the forces of darkness and reaction. From early morning, he was exhorting his friends and contacts to get in touch with the revolting troops and persuade them to gather at the Duma, where, he believed, a unique outpouring of the national will would take place.¹⁰ The result was not the inspiring spectacle that Kerensky had hoped for, but it did set the pattern for the coming days, whereby every imaginable military unit came to the Duma to declare its undying loyalty to the Revolution. In his conversation with fellow deputies at the Tauride Palace Kerensky made no secret of the fact that he expected the arrival of revolutionary units at any moment and that he hoped the Duma would respond appropriately.

By noon the anxious deputies were half sarcastically, half hopefully asking Kerensky when "his troops" were going to arrive. Various accounts placed it during the meeting of the Council of Elders or just before or during the "unofficial" full session of the Duma; but in any event, some time between noon and 2:30

⁹ According to Nekrasov, cited in Burdzhakov, *Vostanie*, p. 235.

¹⁰ Kerensky claims, but gives no details, that the Duma Left had a ready-made plan for such a contingency, which was immediately and effectively set in motion. *Turning Point*, p. 194. In spite of Kerensky's inclination to hyperbole and mystification, other memoirs confirm periodic meetings of figures of the radical and revolutionary intelligentsia at the apartment of N. D. Sokolov, of which the guiding spirit was Kerensky. A plan for demonstrations and strikes in connection with the reconvening of the Duma on February 14 was discussed there, but it fell through because the Bolsheviks refused to cooperate. Nevertheless, the meetings continued. See V. M. Zenzinov, "Fevral'skie dni," *Novyi Zhurnal*, xxxiv (1953), 207-10, and Shliapnikov, I, 29-30, 53, 57-58, 103-4. On the morning of February 27 A. B. Stankevich (pp. 66, 69) received a telephone call in Kerensky's name in his sappers battalion barracks, but his men were already out on the streets. The next day he was able to have them march to the Duma with a military band and red flags flying.

p.m., the expected human wave of armed soldiers and civilians crowded against the iron gates of the Tauride. Kerensky informed his agitated Duma colleagues that he intended to receive the troops and pleaded: "Can I tell them the State Duma supports them?"¹¹ Without replying, they rushed to the windows to observe the spectacle. Kerensky, Chkheidze, and Skobelev went out to greet the crowd. "Where is the new government?" "Give us leaders!" were the cries from the crowd. Skobelev is quoted as replying: "The members of the State Duma are still wavering, they haven't yet decided to take power. We must exert pressure on them . . . it may take a day or so. Have patience, and in the meantime, establish revolutionary order."¹² Again Kerensky discarded caution, called upon the soldiers to form some kind of ranks, and marched them into the palace; the regular guard posts were replaced with "revolutionary" troops, who were instructed to check credentials; nevertheless, the public from the street poured unmolested into the Tauride Palace, occupying every available spot in the Catherine Hall and adjacent passageways. The Duma was now de facto a prisoner of the Revolution, whether it approved of Kerensky's initiatives or not.



By mid-afternoon a sufficient number of liberated party leaders and Left intellectuals had gathered to form a Temporary Executive Committee of 'a Soviet of Workers' Deputies. None of the accounts offers more than the briefest of allusions to the circumstances of its formation, but Skobelev claims the initiative for himself, aided by N. D. Sokolov, a radical lawyer close to the Duma Left, and several leaders of the Workers' Group affiliated with the Central War Industries Committee (K. A. Gvozdev, A. A. Bogdanov). Their chief action was to work out the text of an appeal that one representative for each thousand workers from the factories and one per company from military units be sent to the Tauride that very evening.¹³

¹¹ From an anonymous account in *Volia Rossii* (Prague), Mar. 15, 1921, cited in Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, p. 230. The scene is vividly described by Shulgin, pp. 159-60.

¹² M. Rafes, "Moi vospominaniia," *By*, xix (1922), 186.

¹³ Zenzinov and Skobelev, though participants, fail to supply enlightening details. The best account is by Rafes (pp. 177ff.), who was liberated with Bundists, worker-leaders of the Central War Industries Committee, and

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Despite the obscurity of its genesis, the formation of the Petrograd Soviet at the height of the uprising at the Tauride Palace was a quite logical development. Revolutionary tradition prescribed that at the first opportunity the Workers' Soviet of 1905 should be revived. Various circles—the Left Duma deputies, Bolsheviks and Internationalists on the Vyborg Side, and the Workers' Group—had discussed the possibility since the movement had started on the twenty-fourth, and the slogan was in circulation on the streets and in the factories. It was also natural for the Duma to be regarded as the seat of such a soviet, since the Socialist deputies represented the only visible symbol of worker leadership. Skobelev states that several workers approached him looking for guidance in the days preceding the uprising and that he had advised them to create factory committees and to prepare for elections to a soviet of workers' deputies.¹⁴

When the Bolshevik V. N. Zalezhskii was liberated from the Kresty transfer prison along with the leaders of the Workers' Group, he asked the latter where they were going. "To the State Duma," they replied. "And we to the workers' quarters," rejoined Zalezhskii's comrades.¹⁵ The implication that the Worker Defensists were about to do obeisance to the bourgeoisie was perhaps injected ex post facto, but the two spontaneous reactions to the moment well illustrate the difference in orientation. The Bolshevik activists and the internationalist factions (the Internationalist Mensheviks, Left Socialist Revolutionaries, and Mezhrainitsy) were thinking in terms of a temporary revolutionary government based directly on armed workers and soldiers, whereas the socialist deputies, nonparty intellectuals, and Defensist socialists

other arrested figures and went directly to the Tauride Palace and participated in the summoning of the soviet. Zenzinov names Sokolov, Chkheidze, Skobelev, Gvozdev, Bogdanov (the latter two were Menshevik workers associated with the Central War Industries Committee), Erlich (a Bundist), Aleksandrovich (an S.R. Internationalist), and Grinevich (a Menshevik trade unionist), and is uncertain about Steklov; he erroneously includes Sukhanov. Zenzinov, *Novyi Zhurnal*, xxxiv, 215. Rafes, however, describes the role of Steklov as "pivotal" (p. 190). Burdzhakov offers the same list without Sukhanov and Steklov, but gives no source (*Vosstanie*, p. 212). For text of the appeal, see *RPG*, I, 70. No source explains the decision to include soldiers in the appeal; perhaps it just seemed logical at the moment.

¹⁴ Op. cit. For the currency of the idea, see Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, pp. 207-11.

¹⁵ Zalezhskii, "Pervyi legal'nyi Pe-Ka," *PR*, xiii (1923), 138-39.

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were already thinking in terms of a power combination of a workers' soviet coupled with the Duma. The soviet, as the sole organ representing the "democratic masses," was to dictate the terms and conditions of the settlement. Skobelev testifies that the Temporary Executive Committee of the Soviet resolved to "maintain contact" with the Temporary Committee of the Duma on that first afternoon before the first meeting of the Soviet.¹⁶ Chkheidze and Kerensky were to serve as their brokers on the Duma side, and this arrangement seems to have been followed until the formal agreement of the night of March 2.

In spite of the initial call, the opening session took no cognizance of soldiers' representation, and a soldiers' section was not formed until two days later (under the impact of a crisis shortly to be discussed). The attitude of the leadership seems to have shifted abruptly after the original appeal. An important measure of a different sort affecting the soldiers was taken before the evening session of the Soviet, namely, the formation of the Military Commission, but there is no evidence that it was discussed or ratified at the evening session. The need to create a revolutionary command post of some sort to ward against potential counter attacks by government forces was regarded as urgent. To say that the Military Commission was purely a Soviet organ would not be entirely precise, although its initial composition definitely originated at the Soviet end of the Tauride Palace. Rather, it was loosely sponsored by both the Duma Committee and the Soviet Executive Committee in the first critical hours, like the Food Supply and Finance commissions. Although the details of its origin are hopelessly obscured by selective memories, it is likely that the Socialist deputies Chkheidze and Kerensky, particularly the latter, as he shuttled from one end of the palace to the other, obtained the imprimatur of both organs. The throngs of tired, hungry soldiers cramming the palace were an intimidating presence, but they were obviously unsuited for a serious defense if government troops should attack. The Duma establishment probably held Kerensky responsible for bringing "his troops" into order, and he in turn plied his Soviet contacts to turn up "revolutionary officers" who could bring order out of chaos.¹⁷

¹⁶ Op. cit. The Mezhraiontsy were a group of interfractional Internationalist Social Democrats once headed by Trotsky.

¹⁷ See Mstislavskii, pp. 18, 23, and N. N. Sukhanov, *Zapiski o revoliutsii*, 7 vols. (Berlin, 1922-1923), I, 77, 79. Kerensky's version, under the cover

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N. D. Sokolov was apparently Kerensky's collaborator on the Soviet side. The latter was able to secure the services of two officers with general staff training, S. Mstislavskii and V. Fillipovskii, who had been members of the S.R. military organization since before 1905. Mstislavskii reported to Room 13 at the headquarters of the Soviet Executive Committee, where he was met by Sokolov and introduced to several "soldier-delegates" from the revolting regiments who were to be used to bring the garrison into fighting order. The delegates, however, were little interested in being thus employed, as they were anticipating the opening session of the Soviet to which they had been elected in response to the appeal, reflecting the attractiveness to the soldiers of the idea of soldier representation and the indifference at this point of the Soviet leaders. Sokolov guided Mstislavskii to the opposite wing, to Room 41, and intimated that by arrangement with Rodzianko and Kerensky this would be his staff headquarters (in fact, this was the cabinet of Nekrasov). Kerensky was there to greet them and spoke a few words of gratitude, but then dashed off on other errands. Thus, on the evening of the twenty-seventh two veteran military conspirators were given a free hand to construct a military organization in the interests of the Soviet, but with he covering authority (apparently) of the Duma.

The soldier-delegates had disappeared on the way to the opposite wing, but in Room 41 a number of junior-grade officers were waiting, all volunteers off the streets. They turned out to be exclusively front officers home on leave and unattached to reserve units. Mstislavskii quickly determined that the numerical correlation was overwhelmingly in favor of the insurgents, but that from a staff point of view their position was lamentable. Most of the guards units, sappers, armored car units, and one battalion of the Marine Equipage had joined the mutiny by this time. But the size of Khabalov's force in the Admiralty (which in fact had just

of an editorial "we," makes it appear as a Duma-inspired project, with Rodzianko's blessing (*Turning Point*, p. 200), but Skobelev and Rafes more plausibly claim the initiative for the Soviet, the latter stating (p. 190) that it was decided upon in the late afternoon session of the Temporary Executive Committee. The subsequent merging of sponsorship with the Duma, he claimed, violated this decision. Of course, this does not preclude that Kerensky, learning of the decision, sought on his own initiative a covering mandate of the Duma Committee to fit his own scenario, and he certainly did so later in the evening if not earlier.

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moved to the Winter Palace) was still unknown, and nothing had as yet been heard from the units in the outlying districts. Most of the revolting troops were still wandering the streets and, like those in the Tauride, were exhausted and hungry. Moreover, a good many had surrendered their weapons to civilians or were untrained in their use (sporadic firing into the air for "experimental purposes" was ubiquitous). So far as the Military Commission knew, none of the officers of the revolting regiments came out with their men, and isolated officers on the streets were disarmed and roughed up. Most were hiding in the apartments of relatives and friends. In a matter of an hour or so, organized units loyal to the old government could be brought in from Oranienbaum, Tsarskoe Selo, or Finland. "How could we meet the enemy," Mstislavskii mused, "if on Khabalov's staff there was a *praporshchik* with a head on his shoulders?" Fortunately for the revolution, there wasn't, and the problem of tactics eventually resolved itself: from all directions came reports that this or that objective was being held by a small revolutionary detachment that demanded reinforcements. Mstislavskii or Fillipovskii would dash off an order on Duma stationery, stamp it with the vice-chairman's seal, and hand it to the first available officer, who with the help of a student or intellectual would "agitate" among the idling soldiers for a detachment and then proceed to the objective. Often as not, the detachment was never heard from again. Mstislavskii remarked that "those who received orders failed to carry them out, and those who took action did so without orders."¹⁸ Thus it went through the night into the following day.

In the meantime a crisis was maturing in the Duma circles. The members had already implicated themselves by not vigorously resisting Kerensky's highhanded actions. Duma facilities were effectively occupied and being used by the revolutionary forces, and the Ministerial Pavilion of the Duma had been transformed by Kerensky into an improvised prison for representatives of the former government. Any further delay by the members in declaring themselves would lead to the complete eclipse of the Duma's political influence on events. Many prominent members urged Rodzianko to act; Efremov, Boris Engelgardt, and A. B. Bublikov were particularly sharp in their advocacy of taking power, and even Miliukov and Shulgin wished to forestall the creation of a

¹⁸ All this according to Mstislavskii, pp. 18ff. (quotations from pp. 21 and 35, respectively).

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revolutionary government by non-Duma elements. Rodzianko, it is said, wavered a long time, finally asking for fifteen minutes alone to "think it over." (The time was shortly after midnight, February 28). During this interval he received a telephone call from his nephew, a Preobrazhenskii officer, who informed him that he and his fellow officers had decided to put themselves at the disposal of the Duma, whereupon the Duma chairman emerged from his cabinet and declared: "Very well, I have decided to take power into my hands, but henceforward I demand from all of you absolute subordination to myself. This concerns especially you, Aleksandr Fedorovich [Kerensky]." Kerensky supposedly replied that he would gladly cooperate with the Temporary Committee, but that he was "obliged to consider what is happening in the budget commission" (where the Soviet Executive Committee was meeting).¹⁹

In the course of the night the Temporary Committee issued a proclamation under Rodzianko's signature, announcing that, "owing to the internal disorder brought about by the measures of the old government, the Temporary Committee of the State Duma has found itself compelled to take into its hands the restoration of governmental and social order."²⁰ Other short proclamations enjoined officers and soldiers to resume contact with one another and to put themselves at the disposal of the Duma. Commissars for the most important public institutions and governmental ministries were appointed from the pool of available Duma members. Not the least important of these appointments was that of Bublikov to the Ministry of Transport, where he energetically exploited his control of the railroads and telegraph network to intercept the trains carrying the tsar and echelons from the front. Also, a famous telegram by Bublikov conveyed the news of the Revolution to all parts of Russia.

The most significant step of the Temporary Committee toward

¹⁹ B. E. [Engelgardt], "Revoliutsionnye dni," *Obschchee Delo* (Paris), Mar. 16, 1921. Other details are from S. I. Shidlovskii, *Vospominaniia*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1923), II, 68. Sukhanov, who at that moment was about to look in on the Military Commission, encountered Miliukov emerging from Rodzianko's antechamber. With face aglow, Miliukov informed him: "The decision has been made—we are taking power." *Zapiski*, I, 107. Rodzianko's assumption that he now had an armed force at his disposal proved erroneous, as the Preobrazhenskii soldiers arrested most of their officers and soon declared their loyalty to the Soviet.

²⁰ *IzZh*, no. 2 (Feb. 28, 1917); text in *RPG*, I, 50.

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assuming full power, however, was to nominate the Octobrist deputy Boris Engelgardt, a colonel on leave from the General Staff, as commandant of the Petrograd garrison and chief of the Military Commission. Rodzianko and his entourage went directly to Room 41 and presented Engelgardt as their new chief to a surprised audience of officers and interested Soviet figures. Shortly thereafter, a much agitated Sokolov burst into the room and declared:

The staff has already been formed and is operating, people have been properly selected. What do we need Colonel Engelgardt for? Let those who have been working here from the beginning of the uprising decide who is in command, all the more so, since the task of the moment is not to restore order, but to crush Khabalov and Protopopov!

Sokolov did not preclude participation by bourgeois elements, but insisted that only the Soviet had the confidence of the masses and therefore should have an absolute majority on the commission. Rodzianko is said to have replied: "Gentlemen, since you forced us to get mixed up in this affair, be so kind as to take orders."

Apparently Rodzianko and Engelgardt left without full clarification of where matters stood, since Mstislavskii continued to head operations for the rest of the night. But the Soviet had clearly lost ground in this confrontation, so far as control over the Military Commission was concerned. Mstislavskii noticed that most of the young lieutenants at his disposal were uneasy over Sokolov's outburst, and some of them departed with Rodzianko, protesting their loyalty to the Duma. Someone on the Soviet side suggested to Sokolov: "What are we losing? Let them join us, we still won't let matters slip out of our hands."²¹

This reaction reflected the mentality of the dominant group of Soviet leaders, who conceded in advance that formal power should belong to the bourgeoisie, reasoning that it was better to draw them in as unwilling allies than to drive them into the arms of counterrevolutionary forces. In any case, by 8:00 A.M. the following day Engelgardt and several staff aides were at work in Room 41, side by side with Soviet-oriented officers; although orders were signed by a number of persons, most prominently Fillipovskii, the commission was henceforward identified as the Military Com-

²¹ All quotes from Mstislavskii, p. 30; a less detailed version is in Engelgardt, *op. cit.*

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mission of the Temporary Committee of the State Duma, with Engelgardt as its head. Throughout the day, without apparent conflict, the commission issued orders posting guards over banks, wine cellars, and public facilities, clearing out machine-gun nests, securing various sectors of the city, and appointing temporary commanders of specific units.²²

Other than acting as a clearinghouse, the Military Commission exercised very little influence on the course of events, at least from a tactical perspective. Although there were several alarms throughout the day that government troops had arrived at the railroad stations, the units available to oppose them were never more than of company size and in no mood to fight. Four separate detachments were sent in response to desperate calls from the Nikolaevskii station, but none of them reached their destination. A lieutenant "with a head on his shoulders" secured the station with a small detachment recruited from the streets and informed the Military Commission after the fact. The arsenal was reoccupied by a police unit, but was recaptured by a scratch revolutionary unit; the Peter Paul Fortress was brought over by a telephone call to the commandant in the name of the Duma; the 177th Reserve Infantry Regiment, arriving by train from Tsarskoe, came over to the revolting side; and the 176th Regiment revolted prior to its departure, arrested its officers, and set out for Petrograd by forced march "to join the people." Now there were organized regiments with full field equipment on the side of the Revolution, and the staff no longer had to worry about nearby units called out to pacify the city.

By far the greatest boon to the Revolution was the defection of the First and Second Machine Gun Regiments and the Second Artillery Division (all were training units) stationed in Oranienbaum and Strelna, some twenty miles from the city. On the twenty-seventh they had received orders to pack their field gear and entrain for the capital. Instead they revolted, arrested or lynched their officers (an actual battle took place), and, fearing that the officers still at liberty would sabotage the trains, marched the twenty-mile distance in the course of the night, lifting other military units along the way. At dawn the fifteen-mile-long procession of some 50,000 armed men reached the Narva Gate, where they

²² This and the following are according to Mstislavskii and the published orders of the Military Commission, in *KA*, XLI-XLII, 62-102, which are reprinted in part in *RPG*, I, 53-61.

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were greeted ecstatically by the Putilov workers. Their march through the capital in the early morning mists with countless machine guns and artillery pieces in train was an inspiring spectacle and gave a considerable lift to the morale of the revolting forces. The forces still loyal to the tsar had no hope of raising a similar force in the environs of Petrograd. A Bolshevik officer who had marched with the men and was accepted as their commander, A. Tarasov-Rodionov, reported their arrival to the astounded Soviet Executive Committee, and from there he was directed by Sokolov to the Military Commission. That evening the story repeated itself on a lesser scale with the two battalions of the Marine Guards Equipage stationed near Tsarskoe (2,000 men). Instead of defending the approaches to Tsarskoe as ordered, they revolted and marched to Petrograd.²³

By the evening of the twenty-eighth the tactical situation had materially changed: the Admiralty force was dissolved and the revolt had spread to virtually all major military concentrations around the capital; moreover, the railroads leading into the capital were in the hands of the energetic Bublikov and railroad workers hostile to the government. The only hope for rescuing the monarchy now lay with an expeditionary force from the front. Nicholas did issue orders at Stavka for such a force under General Ivanov before his departure for Tsarskoe Selo in the early morning hours of the twenty-eighth, but the drama of this flawed operation was not to unfold for another forty-eight hours. In the meantime, in the entire area surrounding the capital, except for the rooftops, the Revolution was victorious by the evening of February 28.



Nevertheless, the form the Revolution was to take had not yet become clear. The usual picture, that the Soviet had firmly established itself twenty-four hours or so ahead of the Duma, requires serious qualification. The Soviet was not firmly established by the

²³ See the account of Tarasov-Rodionov, chaps. 5-7. A detailed narrative of the Marine Guards Equipage comprises almost the entire book by Sorokin, *Gvardeiskii Ekvipazh*. Both units contained heavy contingents of workers from the capital, and there had been contacts back and forth before and during the uprising. Both became bastions of Bolshevik influence in 1917. Their commander, the Grand Duke Cyril, created a sensation on the second day of the Revolution by marching to the Duma with his unit, sporting a large red ribbon on his chest. He was nevertheless removed from command by his men.

hasty meeting on the evening of the twenty-seventh and did not as yet have firm links with its constituency, whereas the Duma asserted itself vigorously on the twenty-eighth to forestall any further gain by the Soviet. Nor did the evening session establish a soldiers' adjunct to the Workers' Soviet, for which there were no clear ideas and precedents. Moreover, there is no evidence that soldiers' deputies attended the session in significant number. Sukhanov's tableau of impassioned soldier-orators, upon which most standard accounts are based, undoubtedly reads back into this context a later session. Shliapnikov and Skobelev picture a short session, far more prosaic and businesslike in character, and make no mention of soldiers' representatives (the facility was quite small and by no means provided space for all comers). After choosing a presidium (Chkheidze, Skobelev, and Kerensky), an executive committee, and a food supply commission, and approving *Izvestiia* as an official organ (the first number appeared the following day under the title, *Izvestiia Soveta Rabochikh Deputatov*, that is, no soldiers), the deputies departed to organize their respective districts, which was felt to be the most pressing matter of the moment in view of the ongoing revolt.²⁴ An armed militia of workers to assume police powers was proclaimed during the night, and commissars were appointed to create district clearing-houses to collect weapons and exchange information.

But the Soviet leadership strangely neglected its soldier constituency and referred all questioners to the Military Commission, which in the meantime (perhaps without full awareness on the part of the Soviet Executive Committee) was being taken over by Engelgardt on behalf of the Duma (its physical remoteness in the opposite wing of the palace was in itself a serious tactical disadvantage). Two proclamations published in the first issue of *Izvestiia* show that no new decisions affecting soldiers had been undertaken: the first merely announced the formation of the Soviet and the upcoming session of that day, while the second instructed soldiers detached from their units to come to the State Duma, where they would "find comrades with whom to share your

²⁴ See Sukhanov, I, 96ff., Shliapnikov, I, 146-50, and Skobelev, op. cit. Zenzinov's brief account also features soldier-orators, but one suspects that he refreshed his memory through Sukhanov's account. Apparently no record was kept of the proceedings, but the short account in the first issue of *Izvestiia Petrogradskago Sovieta* (Feb. 28) substantially supports Shliapnikov's version, referring, among other things, only to workers' deputies and not to soldiers'.

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joys and sorrows" and where they could direct all their "inquiries and orders to the State Duma where the Military Commission of all Petrograd regiments is permanently located." The latter is unsigned and makes no mention of the Soviet at all. The same issue incongruously carried Rodzianko's announcement of the assumption of power by the Temporary Committee of the Duma, as well as a Left Internationalist proclamation denouncing the Duma leaders as "traitors and false representatives of the people" and calling for a "temporary revolutionary government" built around strike committees.²⁵ But the important point is that neither in the first issue of *Izvestiia* nor in any Soviet pronouncement of the twenty-eighth was the call for soldiers' deputies renewed, and all actions of the Executive Committee were predicated on the assumption of a workers' soviet only.

While giving its sanction through the Military Commission to the largely spontaneous efforts to liquidate the remaining tsarist forces, the Duma circles on the twenty-eighth devoted their chief efforts to restoring garrison units to the control of their officers and to binding them to the authority of the Duma. In the early morning hours Bublikov and Engelgardt persuaded Rodzianko to sign an order to the Petrograd garrison stating that:

- (1) All unattached lower ranks and military units are immediately to return to their barracks, (2) all officers are to return to their units and take measures to restore order, and (3) all commanders of units are to report to the State Duma for instructions at 11:00 A.M. of the twenty-eighth.²⁶

Engelgardt states that at 5:00 A.M. agitated Soviet representatives burst in on sleeping Duma members and demanded a revocation

²⁵ All this from *IzPS*, No. 1. A "Supplement" published the same day carried a second proclamation calling for the formation of a "provisional revolutionary government." The original composition of the Soviet Executive Committee was fairly evenly balanced between those who regarded cooperation with the Temporary Executive Committee of the Duma as essential to the success of the revolt (Kerensky, Skobelev, Chkheidze, Gvozdev, Bogdanov, the Bundists) and Left Internationalists, fractional and nonfractional (Sukhanov, Steklov, Sokolov, Shliapnikov, Zalutskii, Aleksandrovich), who wished either an insurrectionary government or a weak and helpless "bourgeois government" in the hands of the insurrectionary forces.

²⁶ Text in Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, p. 275, and, in a slightly different version, in Engelgardt, *op. cit.*

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of this "counterrevolutionary order." This was the opening skirmish of a contest for control of the garrison that stretched out over the next day and a half and finally resulted in Order No. One and a victory for the Soviet. In the course of the morning a number of "regiments" appeared before the Duma in marching order, some with officers, others without. The regiments were addressed in turn by Rodzianko, Miliukov, Kerensky, and possibly others. Rodzianko's speeches, heavily saturated with the traditional appeals to "Orthodox warriors" and "the glory of Mother Russia," were basically designed to turn the thoughts of his listeners from the streets toward the front, with the hope of persuading them to submit cheerfully to their officers once more. Miliukov, addressing the Guards Grenadier Regiment, touched on the same points, but stressed more specifically subordination to the Duma Committee and the danger of "dual authority." Journalists' accounts record an enthusiastic response by the soldiers to these speeches and emphasize their impact in winning the allegiance of the soldiers to the Duma and restoring the authority of the officers.²⁷ The Preobrazhenskii, who arrived without their officers, marched away under their command. (In fact, the officers had been hastily fetched by car when news arrived at the Duma that the regiment was on its way; later in the day all the senior officers were arrested by their men.) Several officers dramatically swore they would obey only the orders of the State Duma and would do all in their power to prevent a return to the old regime.

This appeared to be a sharp turning point in the fluid political situation in favor of the Duma and the restoration of normal military command. However, appearances were deceiving. Other accounts record that the hurrahs of the soldiers were mechanical and subdued, and that catcalls and interpolations at Rodzianko's expense deflated the intended effect.²⁸ But whatever the momentary

²⁷ *IzZh*, no. 2 (Feb. 28), reprinted in *RPG*, I, 50-52. The same issue records the appearance at the Duma of the First Infantry Regiment, the Ninth Cavalry, and the Mikhailovskii Military School. Chkheidze also addressed some of these units, but his words are not recorded; Kerensky's speech followed the Duma line, rather than the Soviet's.

²⁸ Tarasov-Rodionov (p. 106) portrays the scene with the Preobrazhenskii as a complete fiasco, with Rodzianko retreating "baffled, furious as a wet hen." Engelhardt claims that Rodzianko's life was threatened by an interlocutor from the crowd but that he boldly stood his ground and challenged his adversary to "go ahead and shoot," which won him the sympathy of the crowd. Several versions credit Chkheidze with embarrassing Rod-

impact may have been (and in all probability the recorded enthusiastic responses were genuine), the net result was not a significant gain for the Duma. The soldiers were not for the most part in any mood to welcome their officers back at this point, as there was still considerable gunfire on the streets and constant rumors of the arrival of progovernment troops. The events of the next two days were to show that the mood of the soldiers was such that no return of the officers on the old basis was conceivable.

Soviet figures had been temporarily caught off guard by the Duma tactics, but as the midday Soviet session was discussing the establishment of district militias and arms collection points, someone put Rodzianko's order to the garrison up for discussion. A passionate debate ensued, during which a series of speakers denounced this "counterrevolutionary act" and even proposed arresting Rodzianko. Even the Menshevik Defensists considered liquidating the Duma Committee, arguing that "the victory of the revolution was not yet a certainty, and a return of units to their barracks would consequently embolden the representatives of the old regime and prolong the period of armed struggle."²⁹ Kerensky and Chkheidze, who were called in for an explanation of the order, claimed that it did not have the sanction of the Duma committee as a whole and would not be further executed. The moderates tended to be satisfied with this explanation, and the final resolution merely registered a formal protest and called for a "clarification of the reciprocal relations between the Soviet and the Committee of the State Duma."³⁰ A Soviet commentator who had access to the unpublished record of this meeting claims that the Menshevik members tried to quash the debate over this issue in order not to disrupt their plans of handing over power to the bourgeoisie, but a Bundist participant claims that the assembly was swayed by another specific consideration, namely, a report on the surrender of the Peter Paul Fortress. A battle had been avoided because of the willingness of the commandant to submit to the authority of the Duma, which in the Bundist's words "underscored the significance of the Duma Committee for the victory of

zianko by informing the soldiers of his vast estates; see, for example, Shulgin, pp. 21-23, who portrays Rodzianko in a state of uncontrollable rage.

²⁹ According to Rafes, *By*, xix, 193.

³⁰ From the unpublished protocol, cited in G. I. Zlokazov, "O zasedanii Petrogradskogo Soveta rabochikh i soldatskikh deputatov 28 fevralia 1917 g.," in *OGV*, p. 59.

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the Revolution over the old regime and facilitated the liquidation of the conflict over Rodzianko's criminal order."³¹ As a result of this episode, the Soviet leadership was alerted to the danger of Duma control over the garrison under the guise of restoring "normal relations" between officers and soldiers and consciously sought means to counteract it.

Within Duma circles, however, efforts toward restoring officers to command of their units were increased. As it became known that the Military Commission was operating with the sanction of the Duma, more and more officers showed up at the Tauride Palace and took on various assignments. The "revolutionary" officers noted with disgust the appearance of obviously reactionary guards and general staff types in Engelgardt's entourage. The explosive Tarasov-Rodionov overheard a "counterrevolutionary" conversation between two of them, deploring Khabalov's ineptitude and the poor showing of the police machine guns, and he created a considerable stir by trying to arrest them out of hand (they escaped).³² Though representatives from both wings operated side by side in the name of the Military Commission until the evening of the twenty-eighth, it is clear that the signed orders of Engelgardt were directed primarily toward reestablishing the command of officers over their units, whereas those of Soviet-oriented members related to occupying strong points and clearing out remnants of resistance (chiefly machine-gun nests).³³ The Military Commission, with Rodzianko's countersignature, issued a new order on the twenty-eighth to "all officers of the Petrograd garrison and all officers in Petrograd," instructing them to appear in the Hall of the Army and Navy on March 1 and 2 between 10:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. "for the purpose of registration and receiving instructions of the commission on organizing soldiers who have joined the representatives of the people for protecting the capital."³⁴ This revised formulation was designed to rescue officers from capricious arrest and disarming on the streets, and perhaps to bolster their prestige sufficiently to allow them to resume their former commands or command of other units that had expelled their own officers.

In pursuance of instructions, many officers attempted to return to their units on the evening of the twenty-eighth, but the result was

³¹ Rifes, *By*, XIX, 193.

³² Tarasov-Rodionov, pp. 117-19.

³³ See orders of the Military Commission, *KA*, XLI-XLII, 78ff.

³⁴ *IzZh*, no. 4 (Mar. 1); English version in *RPG*, I, 63.

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renewed violence on the part of the soldiers. A surprising order from Engelgardt, which noted rumors that some officers were trying to disarm their men, threatened offenders with "the most resolute measures, including shooting the guilty parties."³⁵ It was not a move likely to endear him to fellow members of his caste, but, obviously desperate, he hoped to prevent the Soviet from capitalizing on the situation. That his fears were not ungrounded is confirmed by developments late that evening. Soldier-delegates arrived at the Soviet headquarters late in the evening in a state of great alarm over Rodzianko's order and the officers' efforts to obtain the return of their weapons. Shliapnikov describes their mood as "expressing fear that the officers, returning under the influence of the State Duma Committee, would take vengeance on the soldiers and carry on provocative work against the Revolution, against the rights won by the people."³⁶ For the first time, the Soviet Executive Committee was forced to discuss the question of how to align the revolting soldiers irrevocably behind the Soviet to offset the tactics of the Duma.

Burdzhalov cites a very important, hitherto unpublished proclamation of the Executive Committee that must have been issued as a consequence of this meeting, since, for the first time since the original appeal, it specifically called for the selection of soldiers' deputies:

The Temporary Committee of the State Duma through the Military Commission is organizing the Army and appointing the commanders of units. Not wishing to hinder the struggle against the old authority, the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies does not advise the soldiers to dispense with firm organization and obedience to the orders of the Military Commission and its appointed commanders. But at the same time it advises all military units immediately to choose from every company one representative to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies for the creation of a unified will of all sectors of the working class. Every soldier must show active interest in present events and bend all efforts to see to

³⁵ Ibid.; see also Engelgardt's explanation (in op. cit.) to the effect that persistent reports on the soldier alarm over this rumor were undercutting his efforts to get the officers back to their units and compelled him to take this extraordinary measure.

³⁶ *Semnaatsatyi god*, I, 192; see also Sukhanov, I, 155-56.

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it that no one undertakes actions contrary to the interests of the people.

Comrade soldiers, organize and join your brother workers!³⁷

Though responding to the current crisis, the document underplayed the elements of conflict so as, to borrow Sukhanov's formulation, "not to disrupt the combination." The harried Executive Committee apparently shunted the issue to the full Soviet, as it was not anxious to pursue a question so fraught with alarm to the Duma circles at such a delicate stage in the political struggle. It was now known that a considerable expeditionary force under Ivanov was on its way to the capital and that Rodzianko was personally inclined toward an accommodation with Nicholas. Most Duma figures still wavered between fear of revolutionary chaos and fear of a punitive restoration. Therefore the Soviet forces had to follow a course that would persuade the Duma circles that more was to be gained by siding with the Revolution than by bargaining with Nicholas or with counterrevolutionary generals.

March 1 saw the drama over the interception of the tsar's train and the frustration of Rodzianko's attempt to meet him at Dno by the railroad workers and the Soviet Executive Committee. These maneuvers absorbed the Executive Committee's attention most of the day, so that it was for the most part unaware of the buildup of violent frustration in the barracks. During the night of February 28 and the morning of March 1, the Left Internationalist factions were pouring oil on the flames of soldier discontent. A group of Left S.R.s and Mezhraiontsy put out an inflammatory appeal to the soldiers that was, if anything, to the left of the Bolsheviks. Playing chiefly on the peasant sentiments of the soldiers, it exhorted them to "go to the Duma and ask it: Are the people to get the land? Is their will to prevail? Is there to be peace?" Assuring them that it would be in vain to expect favorable answers from Rodzianko and Miliukov, it urged the soldiers to rely on their own strength alone, and for the first time the idea of soldiers' committees was given written expression and circulation:

Don't let the nobles and officers deceive you—that Romanov pack! Take power into your own hands! Elect your own

³⁷ Cited in Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, p. 292. Note that the designation is of "workers' deputies" only, and not yet "workers' and soldiers' deputies."

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platoon leaders, company and regimental commanders; elect company committees to take care of provisioning. All officers must be under control of company committees.

Only accept those officers whom you know to be friends of the people.

Obey only those delegates sent to you by the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' [*sic*] Deputies.³⁸

The latter, they assured the soldiers, would form a temporary revolutionary government that would dispense land and freedom.

A number of witnesses record the alarm created in both wings of the Tauride Palace by the sharp antiofficer tone of this leaflet. It apparently came to the attention of the Executive Committee late in the evening of March 1, but Tarasov-Rodionov claims to have been handed a copy on the street on his way to the Tauride around noon, and it must at least have been composed *before* the Soviet session of March 1, or surely it would have taken note of Order No. One.³⁹ Probably the authors picked up the slogans of soldier-militants in their first confrontation with the Executive Committee the previous evening (to secure the revocation of Rodzianko's order) and hoped to force the Executive Committee to adopt their slogans. What is clear is that it contained in embryo the propositions that were to be incorporated in Order No. One and possibly helped to articulate them. In any event, agitation along these lines must have been going on in the barracks the night before, as a swarm of soldiers' "deputies" appeared for the Soviet session at midday with very definite ideas of what they wanted.



What followed is one of the best-documented episodes of the Revolution, though it has not heretofore been adequately chronicled, namely, the genesis of Order No. One and of the Soldiers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet.⁴⁰ It is possible in this rare instance, by a careful collation of sources, to eliminate a good many erroneous conceptions in the literature and trace the process

³⁸ Text in Shliapnikov, I, 339-40.

³⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 187, 231-34, and Tarasov-Rodionov, pp. 129-30.

⁴⁰ John Boyd, "The Origins of Order No. One," *Soviet Studies*, xix, no. 3 (1968), pp. 359-72, is one of the few historians to use the available literature. This promising young historian died prematurely, shortly before his excellent article was published.

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step by step from the chaotic reactions in the barracks and on the street to the terse document that more than any other permanently institutionalized a new order of things and finalized the distribution of power in Petrograd, at the front, and throughout the country at large.

Because the Executive Committee was in session over the urgent matter of a *modus vivendi* with the Duma Committee, the full session of the Soviet had opened without the soldiers, and Skobelev occupied the chair. On the agenda was the as yet unresolved question of Rodzianko's journey to Dno, and Skobelev was instructed to secure a three-hour adjournment to allow the Executive Committee to thrash out the matter. At this point, all accounts agree, soldiers burst into the room, demanding that the Soviet stay in session and discuss the situation raised by Rodzianko's order.⁴¹ Skobelev, anxious not to miss out on the important discussion in the Executive Committee, turned the chair over to Sokolov, who drily asked the soldiers what was their pleasure (the assembly had swollen to a thousand participants). Throughout this entire episode, Sokolov acted as the obliging scribe of articulate soldier-spokesmen and can hardly be reckoned as the evil genius who planned the destruction of the army in advance (with or without German money). His positive role was his ability to grasp the political essence of the rather chaotic outpourings of the soldier-representatives and to systematize them into precise points for discussion and decision. After a preliminary discussion, in which the soldiers apparently vented their wrath on the Military Commission while Sokolov meekly argued for its "usefulness" in bringing new units over to the Revolution, an agenda was drawn up that already reflected the outcome: (1) how to deal with the return of the officers, (2) whether weapons should be surrendered to them, and (3) to whom the soldiers are subordinate, the Military Commission or the Soviet.⁴²

⁴¹ In addition to the accounts of Skobelev (op. cit.), Sokolov ("Kak rodilsia prikaz No. 1," *Ogonek*, Mar. 13, 1927), and Shliapnikov (I, 206ff.), Soviet works make use of the unpublished memoirs of A. D. Sadovskii and A. M. Paderin, who were Bolsheviks from the Sixth Sapper and Preobrazhenskii reserve units, respectively. See Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, p. 293, and V. I. Miller, "Nachalo demokratizatsii staroi armii v dni fevral'skoi revoliutsii," *IS*, No. 6, 1966, p. 41.

⁴² Two slightly different versions of the agenda have been combined here, that of the penciled *protokoly*, cited in Miller, *IS*, No. 6, 1966, pp. 30-31, and *IzPS*, Mar. 2. On the last point in the *protokoly* a short refinement is

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The first soldier-orator, S. A. Klivanskii, identified himself as an S.R. and denounced Rodzianko as the mouthpiece of the *pomeshchiki*, who wanted to "take over the movement." He favored the liquidation of the Military Commission and the creation of a joint workers' and soldiers' soviet. "The soldiers must not give up their weapons, and in political questions must obey only the Soviet," he declared.⁴³ In Tarasov-Rodionov's account these thoughts were seconded by another orator: "Why are we bothering ourselves so long? Since we have our Soviet, since it is agreed that troop committees are to be elected everywhere, these committees should also keep account of all arms and machine guns."⁴⁴ A soldier named Borisov, who is identified in the protocol as a Menshevik but is claimed by Shliapnikov to be a Bolshevik, figures as a critic of Sokolov's position on the Military Commission, and in Tarasov-Rodionov's account he warns against the threat of counterrevolution in the present arrangements:

What if the generals whom we recognize should send us to the front? . . . Who will defend our freedom then, comrades? Who will guard our Soviet? . . . I propose that our Executive Committee issue a war order immediately that none of the Petrograd revolutionary garrison shall on any account be sent away from here.⁴⁵

Tarasov-Rodionov records wild shouting and applause in response to this proposal. He credits a Bolshevik soldier from the Preobrazhenskii Regiment, A. N. Paderin, with raising the question of civil equality between officers and men, polite treatment, the abolition of saluting, and the use of "Mister Lieutenant"—all points that were incorporated into Order No. One. An S.R. of the Automobile Section of the Red Cross, Iu. A. Kudriavtsev, forced the issue of whom to obey. Although he sided with Sokolov in not wishing to abolish the Military Commission, he perfectly expressed the emerging consensus: "We give the sanction, we are a force to be reckoned with! [*my sanktsioniruiem, my sila!*]"⁴⁶ This

added: "Is it normal for the Military Commission and ourselves to be coupled? Conflicts and clashes to be decided in whose favor?"

⁴³ Cited from the *protokoly* by Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, p. 294.

⁴⁴ February 1917, p. 139.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ V. I. Miller, *IS*, No. 6, 1966, p. 33 (from the *protokoly*). Another soldier expressed the same sentiment in a different way: "They are joining

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statement, which likewise brought wild cheers, led to the first resolution: "The soldier masses [will obey] the Soviet of Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies. The opinion of the Military Organization [the Military Commission] will be accepted only to the extent that it does not conflict [with directives of the Soviet]. Soldiers' deputies [will be included] in the composition of the Military Organization."⁴⁷ This resolution was the critical turning point. Thereafter it was only a question of drawing logical inferences from this basic postulate. It was followed by another, unanimously adopted, "not to give up arms to anyone."

The thorniest question, however, was what attitude to take toward the returning officers. Many units had already chosen new officers or received their old ones back on a selective basis, refusing those with bad reputations. Some supported the idea of an elected officer staff as a universal principle; others favored selectivity only on the basis of individual officers' support of the Revolution. Concomitant was the question of officers' authority, whether they were to be obeyed implicitly and rendered the usual forms of deference, and whether only on duty or at any time. The principle was adopted that off-duty soldiers and officers were "equal citizens" and that no particular forms of greeting were to be observed, but that on duty (*v stroiu*) "unconditional iron discipline" should prevail.⁴⁸ The same Klivanskii who argued passionately for the first resolution, now argued just as strongly that "officer leadership is necessary to any effective fighting force," appealing to examples of the Allied armies, and that there were not enough "democratic" officers to go around, especially in the guard units. The custody of arms and "control" by the Soviet was a sufficient guarantee against reactionary designs on their part.⁴⁹ The assembly accepted this reasoning, and with it the idea of an elected officer corps was quietly dropped. A final resolution embodying all the

the movement only to get the better of us. We're the masters [*khoziaevy*] along with the workers. We won't let them get the upper hand!" Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Another orator defined the principle as follows: "When on duty, let them exercise command, but politely and without mother curses." An objection was raised that if all the officers who used mother curses were removed, there would be no officers left, not even students.

⁴⁹ Sokolov (op. cit.) categorically states that a majority of the soldier-deputies present rejected the idea of removing all nondemocratic officers, as otherwise "there would not be enough to go around."

above points was drafted, and as a final consideration the assembly decided that these points should be framed as an "order to the garrison" and published the same day.⁵⁰

A deputation carried the resolution to the Executive Committee, which had adjourned temporarily because of the delicate negotiations with the Duma Committee (Chkheidze, Steklov, and Sukhanov were all absent), but again the soldiers forced a resumption of the session. After some tense moments the rump Executive Committee agreed to all the points and temporarily ("for three days") co-opted the deputation into its membership. Apparently there was some debate over whether the projected statement should be called a proclamation (*obrashchenie*) or an order (*prikaz*), but the soldiers insisted on the latter, as only then would the soldiers understand it as binding on officers and soldiers alike. The soldier deputation was then authorized to draw up the text of the order and bring it back to the full Soviet (which was in permanent session pending the outcome of the question of Rodzianko's trip to Dno) for approval. The scene observed by Sukhanov of Sokolov seated at a green cloth table taking down points dictated to him by soldiers carrying rifles was undoubtedly this drafting session.⁵¹ Sokolov's editorial talent undoubtedly had a lot to do with the precision and cogency of the final draft, but it is clear that the content and stress were supplied by the soldiers in accord with the sentiments already articulated. In triumph, the text was brought to the session of the full Soviet, of which Shliapnikov renders the most vivid description:

The soldiers and workers listened to the order in hushed solemnity. One had to see the faces of the soldiers to understand the revolutionary meaning the order carried. A roar of approval, like a gigantic sigh of relief rang out in the sweltering, crowded room of the Soviet. The soldiers were beside themselves with joy.⁵²

⁵⁰ The resolution was published in *IzPS*, Mar. 2. For the text, see Mints, I, 587.

⁵¹ Sukhanov, I, 198. The same scene is portrayed with intense drama by Tarasov-Rodionov (pp. 156-58), and also by Shliapnikov (I, 211-12) and Sadovskii (in Burdzhakov, *Vosstanie*, p. 297). Unfortunately, Sokolov's account does not discriminate between the various sessions and otherwise confuses details. It adds little to the other versions.

⁵² Op. cit., I, 212.

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The words that shook the Old Army to its foundations are reproduced here to complete the story.

To the garrison of the Petrograd district, to all the soldiers of the Guard, Army, Artillery, and Navy, for immediate and strict execution, and to the workers of Petrograd for their information:

The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies has resolved:

1. In all companies, battalions, regiments, parks, batteries, squadrons, in the special services of the various military administrations, and on the vessels of the Navy, committees from the elected representatives of the lower ranks of the above-mentioned military units shall be chosen immediately.

2. In all those military units that have not yet chosen their representatives to the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, one representative to each company shall be selected, to report with written credentials at the building of the State Duma by ten o'clock on the morning of the second of this March.

3. In all its political actions, the military branch is subordinated to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and to its own committees.

4. The orders of the Military Commission of the State Duma shall be executed only in such cases as do not conflict with the orders and resolutions of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

5. All kinds of arms, such as rifles, machine guns, armored cars, and others, must be kept at the disposal and under the control of the company and battalion committees, and in no case should they be turned over to the officers, even at their demand.

6. In the ranks and during their performance of the duties of the service, soldiers must observe the strictest military discipline, but outside the service and the ranks, in their political, general civic, and private life, soldiers cannot in any way be deprived of those rights that all citizens enjoy. In particular, standing at attention and compulsory saluting when not on duty are abolished.

7. Also, the addressing of the officers with the titles "your Excellency," "your Honor," etc., is abolished, and these titles

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are replaced by the address of "Mister General," "Mister Colonel," etc. Rudeness toward soldiers of any rank, and, especially, addressing them as "thou" [ty] is prohibited, and soldiers are required to bring to the attention of the company committees every infraction of this rule, as well as all misunderstandings occurring between officers and privates.

The present order is to be read to all companies, battalions, regiments, ships' crews, batteries, and other combatant and noncombatant commands.

The Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies
March 1, 1917⁵³

Kudriavtsev is credited with finding a printing shop that night, and the order was distributed in the barracks the next day. It appeared in *Izvestiia* No. 3 (March 2) along with a brief summary of the Soviet session, but it was placed on the last page without explanation. The reason was perhaps the unhappiness of the absent Executive Committee members (Sukhanov, Steklov, Skobelev, Chkheidze), who were concerned lest so startling a document interfere with the agreement that had just been worked out with the Duma Committee that same evening on the formation of the Provisional Government. Nevertheless, copies were soon circulating throughout the garrison, which followed its stipulations with great pride and exactitude. Moreover, it was immediately broadcast by telegraph, radio, and printed copies to the entire front, an important development that will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.⁵⁴

A great milestone in the history of the Revolution had been passed. Sokolov accurately assessed its significance in determining the political balance of power:

With the publication of Order No. One the situation of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies sharply changed for the better. The Soviet suddenly perceived it was of a genuine magnitude, supported by a genuinely existing force—the Petrograd garrison. Also recognizing us as a force were the "friends" of the Revolution from the Right, the Kadets and allied elements, who until then only "tolerated" the Soviet in the Tauride Palace. Soldiers, who came in throngs to the Tauride

⁵³ Text in *RPG*, II, 848-49.

⁵⁴ See Boyd, *Soviet Studies*, XIX, no. 3, p. 361; also, see below, pp. 228-31.

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Palace before the publication of Order No. One and who wished to be heard by someone in the government, now came directly to the Executive Committee to be received and to sign up.⁵⁵

But it was also true that the accession of the soldiers limited the socialist leaders' freedom of action and intruded an unpredictable "peasant," not to say *déclassé*, element into what had been conceived as a purely proletarian organization.

Ironically, the soldier deputies responsible for framing Order No. One had originally sought the Military Commission's sanction for their demands and turned to the Soviet only after having been rebuffed. Engelgardt recounts that on March 1 a group of soldiers elected by their units approached him and declared:

The soldiers have lost confidence in their officers, who deserted them as soon as the Revolution began and take a wavering position. In view of this they demanded the publishing of rules governing the election of officers and giving the soldiers control over all matters of domestic routine in their units, and the establishing of new relations between officers and the lower ranks.⁵⁶

Engelgardt conveyed their wishes to the Duma Committee, which categorically refused to discuss the matter. Later, he was approached again by one of the same soldiers, who now claimed to be a member of the Soviet Executive Committee and demanded that new rules of military organization be jointly endorsed by the Soviet and the Military Commission. Informed of the Duma Committee's rejection, the soldier replied: "All the better—we'll put them out ourselves." The first approach was obviously made before the soldiers' demands were well formulated, that is, before the debate in the Soviet, and the second approach was an attempt to get the official imprimatur of the Military Commission for their already worked out positions. One might wonder why they would seek ratification from the body that had ordered the officers to return, but the soldiers themselves ardently desired that their "order" be regarded as official and that its execution be regarded as obligatory for the officers. The rebuff must have more strongly entrenched in the soldiers' minds an identification with their "own" body of authority, the Soviet, as the watchdog of the Revolution

⁵⁵ Op. cit.

⁵⁶ Op. cit.

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against any counterrevolutionary machinations of officers and "bourgeois" political figures. In their eyes Order No. One legitimized a structure that guaranteed them full citizenship and protection against officer reprisals, as well as their own independent voice in the new order of things.

The night of March 1-2 was in general a very tumultuous one in the Tauride Palace, as the two wings desperately tried to strengthen their respective positions, alternately courting their rival and panicking over its dangerous moves. Engelgardt and his phalanx of staff officers had by now eased out or neutralized the revolutionaries on the Military Commission, and Guchkov, as War Minister-designate, took over its direction (the agreement with the Soviet on the formation of the Provisional Government had just been successfully concluded). Guchkov received a number of shocks that evening, which entrenched his pessimism over the unfolding anarchy. A tour of the barracks demonstrated the hopelessness of any speedy restoration of the officers' authority, as everywhere he encountered units conducting elections of officers, expelling some and arresting others. Guchkov's attempts to sway them with eloquence only drew catcalls and angry questions. As a grim finale, a Preobrazhenskii officer, Prince Viazemskii, a close personal friend who accompanied him on this tour, was shot and killed while seated in an auto beside him. On his return to the palace he was met with the news of Order No. One and the confiscation by the Executive Committee of freshly printed copies of his own first order to the Petrograd garrison. The offensive parts, according to Sukhanov, had to do with patriotic appeals to "full victory" over German militarism.⁵⁷

Thoroughly shaken by these developments, Guchkov announced to the surprised Duma Committee, which had just concluded the remarkably smooth negotiations with representatives of the Soviet over the formation of a Provisional Government, that under the present conditions he could in no case accept the portfolio of the Ministry of Defense. Apparently, at around the same time (three or four in the morning of March 2), the Executive Committee received word of the inflammatory S.R. and Mezhraiontsy leaflet directed against officers and Duma figures. This put the Soviet leaders on the defensive and threatened to upset the accord that had just been arranged. In exchange for the acceptance of their

⁵⁷ See Sukhanov, I, 221, and Shulgin, p. 239.

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own points, the Soviet leaders had promised Miliukov to include in their declaration of support for the Provisional Government an appeal to the soldiers to have confidence in their officers. The drafting of the promised joint statement was assigned to Sokolov, who interpreted the agreement according to his own lights and Order No. One. In a fit of hysteria Kerensky exclaimed to Sukhanov that the agreement was off, since Sokolov had written a program sheet against officers. An impasse seemed imminent.⁵⁸

But the crisis blew over as cooler heads prevailed. The Executive Committee members still around at this early hour ordered the confiscation of the leaflet and a disclaimer in *Izvestiia*, and Sukhanov and Steklov worked out with Miliukov a new version of the Soviet statement, which was published the following day, together with the text of the Provisional Government's new program.⁵⁹ The key paragraph of the Soviet statement was actually composed by Miliukov himself:

The danger of an armed movement against the Revolution has not been eliminated. In order to avert this danger, it is very important to assure the harmonious, coordinated work of soldiers and officers. Officers who value freedom and the progressive development of the country must exert every effort to adjust their joint activities with the soldiers. They will respect the personal and civil dignity of the soldier, they will be sensitive to the soldier's sense of honor. The soldiers, for their part, will remember that an army is strong only insofar as there is a union between soldiers and officers, that one cannot stigmatize the entire officer corps for the bad conduct of individual officers.⁶⁰

The one possible stumbling block, the question of moving revolutionary troops away from Petrograd, was conceded by Miliukov with surprising equanimity. It was included as point seven of the program statement of the Provisional Government and bore the

⁵⁸ See Miliukov, *Istoriia vtoroi russkoi revoliutsii*, 3 vols. (Sofia, 1921-1923), I, 47-48, Shulgin, pp. 232-34, and Sukhanov, I, 205. Unfortunately, Miliukov's account is not distinguished by the objectivity one would expect from a professional historian. He seldom states his own motives frankly and is exceedingly careless with respect to factual accuracy. His personal memoirs on this episode, though more detailed, are less revealing. *Vospominaniia*, II, 307-8.

⁵⁹ See Sukhanov, I, 136, and other accounts.

⁶⁰ *RPG*, I, 136.

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signature of Rodzianko as well as those of members of the new cabinet: "Those military units that took part in the revolutionary movement shall be neither disarmed nor withdrawn from Petrograd."⁶¹ The crisis in power had passed, and the ground rules for the future had been laid down. The road ahead was by no means smooth, but the situations causing alarm were henceforward less frequent and virulent. Although Order No. One was not a part of the bargain between Soviet and Duma circles, both sides were forced to live with it for fear of arousing the soldiers again.



The available sources do not allow a picture of the upheaval in the barracks parallel with that of events in the Tauride Palace. The few accounts make no effort at completeness or exact chronology. Nevertheless, it is clear that in the course of the mutiny very few officers remained in control of their units, so that the destruction of their authority must be ascribed to the crushing force of events rather than to Order No. One, which circulated only later, on March 2. V. B. Stankevich, an officer in the Guards Sappers Battalion, recounts that his soldiers were brought out by the revolting Volynskiis and Litovskiis on the morning of the twenty-seventh. The commanding officer, Colonel Ivanov, and a lieutenant were killed for ordering the training unit out against the insurgents; other officers were arrested, and most of the rest fled. Stankevich himself was on his way to the barracks, but was warned away by one of his soldiers. He narrowly missed lynching on the street, but his own soldiers vouched for him ("Nash khoro-shii"). The next day Stankevich tried to regroup the unit and bring it to the Duma. But there were difficulties:

The new one [commanding officer] senior in rank, chosen by the officers and representatives of companies, was not satisfactory. From somewhere appeared soldier-agitators who sowed discord, calling upon the men not to trust their officers. A new one had to be agreed upon, an almost illiterate *pra-porshchik*.⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 135. Miliukov, in one of the few enlightening passages of his account (*Vospominaniia*, II, 307), explains that he agreed to point seven because he was still contemplating the necessity of having to rely on the insurgent troops against the expeditionary force of Gen. Ivanov, assuming, unwisely, that the arrangement would be temporary.

⁶² Op. cit., p. 69.

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Stankevich was then able to get them into ranks and march them to the Duma.

Since all this occurred on the twenty-eighth and was probably not untypical of what was happening in other garrison units, it establishes a logical sequence of events. The soldiers clearly had the upper hand from the very first moment, and by the fact of having mutinied and killed several officers, could not turn back. Even though the remaining officers were in effect their prisoners, the soldiers were not unwilling to reach an accommodation until "agitators" from the streets stirred up hostility again. The "election" of new commanding officers was therefore a necessity arising out of the situation, not an idea inspired by Order No. One. The first selections seem more the result of bargaining sessions with the remaining officers than formal elections, and the soldiers allowed themselves to be persuaded to choose the next in command. The agitators transformed this into direct elections by the soldiers, and the choice usually fell on officers least likely to assert authority. One can see how the return of the rest of the officers in response to Rodzianko's order, which came on the heels of the above events, would threaten the soldiers' supremacy and possibly bring reprisals. The identity of the "agitators," though impossible to document, is not difficult to surmise. Those soldiers, some of them with a party past, who had spent a day and a night on the streets pushing the uprising forward and mixing with workers, revolutionary intellectuals, and other civilians, and who were interested above all in preventing any restoration of authority that would bring reprisals down on their heads, were going from barracks to barracks to bring over other units. They were the ones who reacted most vigorously to Rodzianko's order and showed up at the Tauride Palace on the evening of the twenty-eighth and again on the next day to force the adoption of Order No. One.⁶³

⁶³ Those who participated in the framing of Order No. One may be regarded as representatives of these agitators, most of them not ordinary soldiers, but volunteers, military clerks, and specialists, and wartime junior officers, ex-students, or self-educated intellectual-*raznochintsy* in uniform. V. I. Miller lists the names and party sympathies of the framers: four Mensheviks, three "Internationalists," two Bolsheviks, and one S.R. (two, possibly three of the Mensheviks later became Bolsheviks). *IS*, No. 6, 1966, p. 40 (which cites the unpublished memoirs of Sadovskii, a Bolshevik of the Sixth Sappers). Shulgin (pp. 185-86), who is not given to refined sociological characterization, styles the ubiquitous soldier-orators who held forth in the Catherine Hall of the Tauride Palace as "Caucasian apes or

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In the Moskovskii Regiment, where there had been a pitched battle with the officers and the training unit, the feeling against the officers was particularly strong, but their commander, Colonel Iakovlev, was very popular, and when he showed up on the evening of the twenty-eighth to urge them to march to the Duma the next day, he was well received. But the soldiers were still agitated over the prospect of the return of the other officers, and at a meeting early the next morning they decided not to receive them under any circumstances. When the officers arrived and read to the soldiers their orders to resume command, they were met with renewed threats of violence and arrests. Encouraged by street crowds, the regiment disarmed their officers and proceeded to elect their own company commanders. At this juncture Colonel Iakovlev arrived and made a very sentimental speech on behalf of the new government, persuading the soldiers to strike up the "Marseilles" and march to the Tauride Palace. There the familiar scene of a welcoming speech by Rodzianko, punctuated by loud cheers, took place. The account does not make clear whether Iakovlev or Rodzianko tried to sway the soldiers with respect to their officers, but it concludes laconically:

In the barracks the soldiers proceeded with the election of company commanders from their own comrades—and then elected two deputies to the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. We arrested four officers in our battalion, whom we sent to the Tauride Palace. One of them was shot on the way by the soldiers.⁶⁴

Again it is clear that it was the soldiers' determination not to receive their officers back on the old terms that logically led to the expedient of rudimentary elections. Order No. One simply legitimized an impulse that had already assumed firm shape by force of circumstances.

One can assume that the pattern was roughly similar in other

worse" (that a number of them were manifestly Semitic did not surprise him).

⁶⁴ *Bolshevizatsiia petrogradskago garnizona*, ed. Drezen, pp. 28-29 (the account originally appeared in *Pravda*, Mar. 10 and 11). That the author was a simple soldier and not an indoctrinated Bolshevik is evident from the fact that he made no effort to conceal his naive admiration for his colonel and Rodzianko.

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revolting regiments, although parallel accounts are lacking.⁶⁵ The sequence was slightly different in those units that came over to the mutiny on the second day. Though the officers were unmolested if they remained in their barracks, they were no longer in control of their men. Colonel Fomin was able to march his Izmailovskii detachment unarmed from the Admiralty to their barracks after they were released by General Beliaev at midday of the twenty-eighth, but that night, under the influence of the roaming insurgents, the soldiers took over the barracks, looted the officers quarters, and decided to march to the Duma by themselves the following day. Fomin received word of it after they had left, rounded up a dozen or so officers, and hurried to meet them at the Tauride (obviously wishing to make a good showing for Rodzianko). He found that several senior officers were already in touch with the Military Commission (a colonel and two captains) and were on hand at the Tauride to greet them. Three officers were also brought in by the soldiers under guard, one of them badly wounded. These officers had been assigned with a company of Izmailovskiis to guard the Putilov works and had tried to stop the Oranienbaum machine gunners from passing through the Narva Gate. They were beaten and arrested by their own men (another had been killed).⁶⁶ The men were persuaded to hand their captives over to Rodzianko, who thanked the soldiers for their vigilance, but then shook hands with the officers and released them.

In spite of the very tense situation, the facade of ceremonial harmony was maintained. Rodzianko evoked hurrahs from soldiers

⁶⁵ In Shklovskii's Armored Car Division, the officers did not resist when their men joined the rebellion, and most of them were left in peace. In fact, they themselves voted to support the rebellion and wore red arm bands as a token of their sympathies. The captain of Shklovskii's unit was very popular and was given an armed escort to protect him from humiliations on the street. Nevertheless, the officers were disarmed and the division commander removed. One lieutenant was arrested and sent to the Tauride. The Military Commission thanked the soldiers for their vigilance and then gave the officer an assignment on the streets. According to Shklovskii (pp. 5-8), he soon made a great career out of the Revolution. The greater leniency toward officers in this unit reflected a social composition different from that of a typical guards unit. The officers were mostly educated *raznochitsy* and hence more "democratic" by origin and persuasion; the soldiers and NCOs were either skilled workers and artisans or, like Shklovskii and the Bolshevik Paderin, educated *raznochintsy*.

⁶⁶ See Fomin, *Izmailovskaia Starina*, xvii, 58ff.

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by appealing to "a new Mother Russia" and exhorting them to observe discipline toward their officers, who, he assured them, were now under the orders of the new government. They marched back to the barracks, accompanied by their officers, with red flags flying. According to Fomin, Rodzianko himself requested the commander to supply the names of "those officers whom the soldiers regard as unsuitable to remain in the battalion," suggesting that even the partisans of order were obliged to be flexible. But once such a concession was made, it became all but impossible to arrest the process short of outright elections of officers. The agitators easily fanned soldier resentments until the soldiers' candidates were accepted by the command. Burdzhhalov supplies several additional examples of the replacement of commanding officers with junior officers, and Kaiurov, a worker-Bolshevik, claims to have persuaded an engineering unit to reelect its commanding staff.⁶⁷ Completely apart from Order No. One, therefore, a massive overturn was taking place in the officers' staff of the Petrograd garrison.

It should be kept in mind that the superannuated, the recovering wounded, and the systematic evaders of front-line service predominated among the officership, and they took their garrison duties very lightly. Not looking for trouble, many of them, especially those with bad reputations, asked to be reassigned or simply hid. There were enough officers at home on furlough, waiting for transfer, or without specific duties to make up any deficiencies. The Military Commission was very busy the first few days assigning new commanders, in most cases ratifying the decisions of the soldiers.⁶⁸

From March 2 on, the period of turmoil and unpredictable violence was essentially over, and life in the barracks rapidly settled into a new sort of routine. For the soldiers, the anxiety-creating questions had been resolved by Order No. One, and hapless officers were obliged to adapt to the new order of things. The period of celebrations and inflated rhetoric set in: all parties, including senior officers, conservative politicians, and *Novoe Vremia* sang praises to the new freedom, the Revolution, and the heroism of the people in destroying absolutism. The soldiers especially displayed a naive joy and pride in the attentions lavished on them. They relished the endless parades, speeches, and revolutionary symbols,

⁶⁷ Burdzhhalov, *Vosstanie*, p. 301, and Kaiurov, *PR*, XIII, 170.

⁶⁸ See the numerous examples in the published orders, *KA*, XLI-XLII, *passim*.

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such as red ribbons and slogan-bearing banners. They especially enjoyed the flattering oratory that accented the "new conscious self-discipline" in the "revolutionary army of free Russia," which was to replace the old discipline based on fear of punishment and unrestricted officer authority. At the same time, they were not averse to crude, belligerent appeals to "show Wilhelm" that a free army could "settle his hash" more readily than an "army of slaves."

The few available records of the new soldiers' committees show how quickly a new routine was worked out in the barracks. The *protokoly* of the soldiers' committee of the Izmailovskii Regiment from March 2 to 6 show that at the very first session the composition of the committee and the commanding staff was settled (one representative from each company or specialized unit); Colonel Kozeko was chosen as commander, with Fomin as his second in command.⁶⁹ A Colonel Diehl was chosen as commissary officer, and a Praporshchik Veber as finance officer. Expressing their recognition of the need for order and discipline, they resolved that "the commander receives the full power of his office." On matters of substance, the sessions showed the most interest in a review of regimental finances and commissary operations. The treasury box was to be opened in the presence of the committee and all expenditures of recent days accounted for; the commissary unit was to present a report on new procedures of review worked out jointly with a representative of the committee. It was stipulated that an officer elected by his peers was entitled to attend all sessions of the committee, that a member of the committee would be on duty at all times (a way of keeping the duty officers under observation), and that the commissary officer enjoyed the full power of his office. That the latter took his orders from the committee, however, is clear from a resolution to the effect that enlisted men would now enjoy the same privileges as officers at the supply store for officers' families. At a subsequent session it was determined that battalion, company, and unit commanders would be included in the committee (it is doubtful that this arrangement lasted very long), that the number of soldiers' delegates would be doubled, that two soldier-delegates should attend all officers' meetings, that the cash box be opened and disbursements made only in the presence of committee representatives, and, finally, that all bat-

⁶⁹ Shliapnikov, II, 52. These and the following *protokoly* of the soldiers' committees are published in *ibid.*, pp. 252-70.

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talion orders affecting the internal life of the battalion (that is, all matters except those pertaining to military training and duty assignment) be submitted for discussion to the committee before being issued.

The Guards Grenadiers followed the same general pattern. An assembly of seventy representatives elected an executive committee; only one officer was allowed to attend committee meetings without vote; records of all disciplinary cases were to be destroyed by the commanding officer in the presence of the soldiers; the commander was to issue paragraphs one, two, five, six, and seven of Order No. One and the explanatory Order No. Two as regimental orders (points three and four apparently being regarded as purely political); the military police unit was terminated as "no longer necessary"; "courts of honor" were to be established in each company to handle minor disciplinary offenses (implying the abrogation of the disciplinary authority of officers); and the officers' quarters were to be searched with due tact, apparently to check for weapons. The records show the same preoccupation with regulating commissary, financial, and other matters of routine.

The records of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment suggest that its upheaval was more thorough and made no compromises with the "old discipline." Out of fifty-seven officers, six senior officers, including Colonels Argutinskii-Dolgorukov and Dvorzhitskii, and one lieutenant were placed under arrest, seventeen more were excluded from the battalion, and only eighteen of the remaining were given command positions. Only two captains were appointed as company commanders, and two companies were assigned to senior-grade sergeants. A Praporshchik Zaring was elected as commanding officer of the regiment. His address to his troops showed great enthusiasm for the new political order, giving equal recognition to the Duma and the Soviet and an explicit recognition of the provisions of Order No. One. He requested the committee to work out immediately the manner of control of weapons, stating that he fully shared the "desire of the soldiers to be armed in these memorable, but still anxious, times of a regenerated Russia."⁷⁰ He issued a detailed order to check all weapons for needed repairs, and in this way tactfully determined the quantity of weapons still on hand and who had custody of them. Thus order did not entirely disappear with the issuance of Order No. One, nor even

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 268.

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with officer elections, as is often alleged in the émigré literature; indeed, one can argue that without them, real chaos might have resulted, since the new practices at least recognized the need for a command structure and the obligation to obey lawful military orders. It was perhaps the only sort of order that could have emerged out of the unprecedented mutiny without paving the way for continuing upheavals.

Things were not as smooth in the barracks, however, as they appeared to be in the bland *protokoly*. Officers, even elected ones, bitterly resented the diminution of their authority and were forced to swallow their despair over the new system in silence. Despite the magnanimous gestures of the committees in acknowledging the necessity of military discipline, the officers were faced with constant reminders of their lack of real power. The soldiers went about in disheveled array, saluted sloppily if at all, even when on duty, sat smoking with rifles across their lap while on guard, and on occasion deliberately insulted officers, knowing that the latter could not retaliate. Soldiers were always on hand in intimidating numbers at the officers' *sobranie*, monitoring every conversation and telephone call. Officers' comings and goings were strictly observed, whereas the soldiers moved in and out of the barracks at will, invited in friends and political agitators, and ostentatiously flouted the few remaining regulations (as, for example, no smoking while on duty). Even the committees undermined the officers' prestige by offering "suggestions," which were in fact orders, imposing needless controls, and making slights on their honor, such as not allowing them to carry sidearms. In spite of constant entreaties by the officers to resume training, the committees found all sorts of excuses not to do so, in fact surrendering to the universal sentiment against it. The reasoning was that since the government had agreed not to send revolutionary troops out of the capital, training duties were unnecessary, and to resume them would be a sign of bad faith or counterrevolutionary intent.

Colonel Fomin, who was still quite popular, was aroused one night to find soldiers hastily dressing and grabbing their weapons in a state of great agitation. An unidentified soldier from another unit had burst in announcing that "counterrevolutionary troops are detraining at the Baltic Station—we have to disarm them or there won't be any more freedom."⁷¹ When Fomin sought to dis-

⁷¹ *Izmailovskaia Starina*, XVIII, 69.

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suade them, his men wavered, but the orator persisted: "Are you going to obey him [Fomin] or our revolutionary committee?" They formed ranks, pleading with Fomin to move them out, but he refused, stating that he had no such order and that the report was undoubtedly untrue. His men thereupon left without him, only to find that it was another false alarm.

Most unpleasant for Fomin (who was a confirmed anti-Semite) was the Jewish student who claimed to be the Soviet's liaison man to the regiment. He and many other suspect characters and troublemakers were harbored by the regiment, and Fomin's attempts to get rid of them were in vain. Though his men respected him, they did not necessarily trust him, and any petty agitator could easily spoil such trust as remained.

Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky relates how he was to report to the Guards Sappers battalion a few days after the outbreak of the Revolution and was told by the haggard-looking commander: "We are prisoners here and are watched continually. . . . See that fellow there? He's on duty watching me through the window. It's better than in the first days, though. There used to be a man in our room the whole time to hear what we were saying."⁷² Lobanov-Rostovsky was informed that he was in effect a prisoner and that one of three things would happen to him: he would be murdered, arrested, or elected as an officer of the regiment. Lobanov-Rostovsky passed the test because a soldier vouched that he had once allowed his men to go home on leave against the orders of the commander. Lobanov-Rostovsky noticed that the billiard table had been smashed in the officers' *sobranie* and that soldiers supposed to be on guard duty left their posts to answer the call of nature (for two hundred years, mused Lobanov, sentinels had been posted without interruption). The officers did manage to persuade the committee to institute elections for a disciplinary committee, but the soldiers sabotaged the elections by expropriating the balls intended for use as ballots to play marbles. The election never took place, just as the suggestion to restore drilling was turned down. Lobanov-Rostovsky sadly concluded:

Thus 1,000 men with 5,000 rounds of ammunition remained in complete idleness with nothing to restrict their doings in any way, while a great revolution flowed like a tempestuous torrent outside the gates of the barracks, stirring them with

⁷² Lobanov-Rostovskii, p. 205.

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its insidious propaganda and its call to action. Stemming this tide were three young men, Bronevsky, Miasoiedov, and I, of whom Bronevsky, the eldest, was twenty-seven with no other weapons except the power of persuasion. Such was the position in our battalion, and probably a similar situation existed in every unit throughout the country.⁷³

⁷³ Ibid., pp. 212-13.

CHAPTER VI



THE REVOLUTION AT THE FRONT

FOR SOME TIME prior to the February Revolution the front soldiers had been feeding on rumors and vague expectations of developments that held out the promise of peace, so that initially, the news of the Petrograd strikes and demonstrations excited no more than the usual interest. They were quite unprepared for the magnitude of the Petrograd upheaval, and certainly not for the end of the dynasty. Although telegraph agencies were forbidden to convey information on the mounting crisis, returning soldiers relayed their versions—which in transmission assumed grotesque and contradictory shapes—within twenty-four hours or so on the Northern Front and within several days on the more distant sectors. Thus tidings of the massive garrison revolt would have reached the northern sectors by March 1, and by March 3 enemy propaganda was advertising the fact on the southern fronts.¹ Since the twin abdications of Nicholas and Michael was not announced to the troops through official channels until March 4 and 5, there was a day or so of intense speculation and rumor, slightly longer on the Northern Front. Nevertheless, as senior commanders were keenly aware, given the atmosphere of suspicion and alarm, even short delays could greatly magnify the extent of the turmoil, and thus Stavka was bombarded with urgent requests for an official version of events.

Published communications between Stavka and various commands, diaries of generals and officers, reports on various incidents, and routine regimental orders allow one to construct a fairly reliable and consistent picture of the transmission of Petrograd events to the front, and a less precise, but no less vivid, one of the reactions it provoked. A study of these sources reveals the

¹ See below, p. 216.

immediate and far-reaching impact of the Revolution on the entire edifice of the military order, leading one to conclude that officers' disciplinary powers were permanently impaired and that dual authority became as universal at the front as at the center. Thus it is well worth the effort to reconstruct this process step by step.



Stavka, of course, was kept informed of developments in the capital through the telegrams of Khabalov, Beliaev, and other military authorities. The generals could hardly have been deceived by Beliaev's disingenuous claim to be in control of the situation, and by midday on the twenty-seventh they were fully disabused by the latest of Rodzianko's telegrams:

The reserve battalions of the Guards regiments are in the throes of revolt. They are murdering their officers . . . civil war is aflame. . . . If the movement spills over into the army, then the enemy will have conquered, and the collapse of Russia, and with it the dynasty, becomes inevitable. . . . The hour that will determine your fate and the country's has arrived. Tomorrow will be too late.²

But Stavka was immobilized by the curious behavior of its pivot, the imperial Commander in Chief. General Adjutant D. N. Dubenskii, who kept a detailed diary of the tsar's activities, noted that since the previous day the latter had "raised no questions about current developments and in general consulted with no one, but pensively strolled along the forest path."³ Dubenskii and the tsar's personal physician, Fedorov, conspired that night to sit at the tsar's table and to prompt him with the idea of a punitive expedition under General Ivanov, the retired former chief commander of the Southwestern Front who was now in the tsar's personal entourage. The ailing Chief of Staff, General M. V. Alekseev, who had not been consulted at all, was instructed around 10 P.M. to send out the necessary operational orders: two cavalry and two infantry regiments from each of three fronts (Northern,

² *KA*, xxi, 6-7. This article constitutes an invaluable collection of Stavka's communications with various commands and Petrograd authorities for the first ten days of March, and will be relied upon in this account extensively.

³ Dubenskii, "Kak proizoshel perevorot v Rossii," *Russkaia Letopis'*, III (1922), 31-32. Relying on a personal diary for his account, Dubenskii was something of an official court historian in Nicholas's entourage.

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Western, and Southwestern) were to be sent, with supporting machine-gun and artillery units. The battalion of St. George's Cavaliers that was serving as an honor guard at Stavka was to accompany General Ivanov's command train to Tsarskoe Selo, where he was to establish his headquarters.⁴

This ill-fated adventure will not be followed in detail, as it deserves only a footnote to the pathetic efforts to rescue the old order. Suffice it to say that it ended forty-eight hours later when Ivanov, unable to detrain at Tsarskoe owing to the defection of the local garrison, was trapped in the maze of railroad lines around the capital as railroad workers locked switches onto sidings, blocked main lines with disabled freight trains, and drained the steam out of his boilers. The advance echelons from the Northern Front were held up at the garrison station at Luga, about eighty miles from Petrograd, and brought over by local troops to the Revolution.⁵ However, a significant part of the command structure had been alerted that a major civil conflict was in the offing, and rumors were set flying by orderlies, telegraph operators, and railroad dispatchers (everyone understood the meaning of major troop movements to the capital).⁶

⁴ For the text of Alekseev's orders and the timing of the execution of the mission, see *KA*, xxi, 9-11, 16, 24. Most accounts, including those emanating from Stavka, are acquainted only with the dispatching of the St. George's battalion and therefore give the impression of a woefully inadequate force for the task at hand. But the published orders reveal that a force of several divisions was indeed assembled, and that the lead echelons from the Northern Front got as far as Luga. The real reason for the failure of the expedition was the rapid spread of the revolt to all major garrisons surrounding the capital and the control of the railroad network by prorevolutionary forces. Once halted at the railway stations, the troops proved quite susceptible to agitation by the crowds of soldiers, railroad workers, and civilians. The entire adventure in manipulating the railroad apparatus to frustrate the Ivanov expedition is amusingly chronicled in Iu. V. Lomonosov, *Vospominaniia o martovskoi revoliutsii* (Berlin, 1921).

⁵ For an excellent account of the Luga confrontation, see N. Voronovich, "Zapiski predsedatelia soveta soldatskikh deputatov," in *Arkhiv Grazhdanskoi Voiny*, II (Berlin, 1922), 11ff. The further progress of the expedition can be followed in the documents in *KA*, xxi. The tsar recalled the expedition on March 2 at 2:30 A.M. after his arrival in Pskov (*ibid.*, p. 60). His own Preobrazhenskii's were designated as part of the force to be sent from the Southwestern Front, but they could get no farther than Special Army headquarters at Lutsik.

⁶ An officer in the Pavlovskii Guards Regiment notes in a letter of March 4 that he and his fellow officers speculated on the reason for the

The tsar had been under considerable pressure on this day to yield to Rodzianko's plea for a ministry of confidence. Rodzianko had forwarded copies of his telegram of the twenty-sixth to front commanders, and on the twenty-seventh Generals Ruzskii and Brusilov, chiefs of the Northern and Southwestern fronts, respectively, responded by urging the tsar to comply.⁷ Two similar communications arrived the same day: one from Prime Minister Golitsyn, requesting that his cabinet be dismissed and that a new one entrusted to Rodzianko or Prince Lvov be formed, and a like suggestion from Grand Duke Michael.⁸ Alekseev, who conveyed the messages to the tsar, urged him to accept the proffered solution but was cut short. Instead, the tsar announced his decision to return to Tsarskoe and ordered the immediate preparation of his train. Alekseev informed Grand Duke Michael of these decisions, as well as of the expeditionary force under General Ivanov. He frankly encouraged the grand duke to renew his representations to the tsar upon the latter's arrival in Tsarskoe, hinting that the Army was prepared to back this solution. There is ample evidence that most of the higher officers at Stavka, as well as a number of front and army chiefs and most of the naval command structure, strongly favored a Duma-based government and were not unwilling at this point to force the tsar's hand. When General Boldyrev (quartermaster for the Northern Front) heard of the tsar's plan to pacify the capital, he noted in his diary: "What is the use of continuing to fight? All around there is secret and open sympathy."⁹ When Nicholas departed at 5:00 A.M. on the twenty-eighth, he expected least of all that it was the generals who would seal his fate.

Nicholas's departure left Stavka in a very peculiar position. On the one hand, at this, the most critical moment in its history, the Russian Empire was left without a Commander in Chief, since

sudden detachment of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment from the line and concluded that they were to be used to suppress disorders in the capital, news of which had been circulating since March 1. See "Iz ofiterskikh pisem s fronta v 1917 g.," *KA*, L-LI (1930), 197.

⁷ *KA*, XXI, 7, 13.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12. There is no published text of Golitsyn's telegram, but it is paraphrased in Lukomskii, p. 126.

⁹ "Iz dnevnika gen. V. G. Boldyreva," *KA*, XXIII (1927), 25. The sympathy expressed was for the Duma (which had just announced that it was assuming power), not for the soldiers' uprising.

the imperial train had no means of communication with either the capital or with Stavka. The "dictator," General Ivanov, was also out of reach for the next day and a half and did not know the whereabouts of the units under his command. Alekseev, as Chief of Staff, continued to issue directives to concentrate troops on the capital, but he was not empowered to make any new decisions. On the other hand, in the tsar's absence he could influence events considerably if he so chose. There were still direct wire (Hughes apparatus) connections with the Admiralty and the General Staff, so that coded messages could be exchanged. Khabalov and Beliaev could be circumvented if necessary through the naval chain of command, which was known to sympathize with the Duma, as did Ruzskii, Brusilov, and probably even Grand Duke Nicholas (now chief commander of the Caucasus Front). His Quartermaster General, Lukomskii, was even more eager than himself to maneuver Nicholas into a compromise with the Duma. Yet Alekseev was anxious lest developments in Petrograd disorient the front, first by upsetting the tight railway schedule that kept it supplied (reserves of food and ammunition had to be forwarded daily), and second, by infecting it with political unrest. Consequently, he considered the restoration of order to be paramount, and he had to reckon on the potential use of the troops under Ivanov's command. But if the mutiny was to accomplish what all their entreaties to the tsar could not, namely, a popular ministry based on the Duma, then General Ivanov had to be kept in check. The trick was for Alekseev to push in the right direction at the right time without provoking the tsar to remove him prematurely.

Although Alekseev knew by the twenty-eighth that Khabalov's cause was lost, he did not know whether the Duma was in control and therefore hesitated to act. Yet, promptly after Ivanov's departure, he informed front commanders of all developments of which he had knowledge, something that he would hardly have done with Nicholas or Ivanov present. In merely summarizing facts from official communications, he conveyed a picture of such hopelessness for the government that the commanders would have had no doubt that to remain loyal would mean going down with a sinking ship. From Alekseev's brief mention that "according to private sources, a revolutionary government has taken over the administration of Petrograd," which was based on the State Duma "with supplementary elections from the workers and revolting troops," and his repeated stress on the imperative of restoring

railroad movement and the flow of supplies, it was easy enough to reach the conclusion that an accommodation with the revolutionary forces was preferable to the prospect of civil war.¹⁰ Even so, Alekseev maintained a posture of loyalty for the rest of the day, informing Beliaev of troop movements to the capital.

In the course of the next twenty-four hours new developments persuaded Alekseev to change his course of action. Undoubtedly, a strong consideration was Rodzianko's proclamation of the twenty-eighth ("Bublikov's telegram") announcing the formation of a new government and exhorting all railroad employees to keep the flow of supplies moving to the front.¹¹ In the early morning hours of March 1, Alekseev sent a wire to Tsarskoe and Pskov, which he hoped would reach Ivanov before the general made a fatal move. Noting that "private sources" testified to the complete restoration of order and the garrison's recognition of the new government headed by Rodzianko, he advised that "your mode of action must change, as negotiations will bring tranquility, thus avoiding a disgraceful civil conflict so desired by our enemy, while maintaining institutions and factories and keeping production going."¹² When General Kvetsinskii, chief of staff to General Evert on the Western Front, reported the receipt of Bublikov's telegram and other orders designed to prevent the movement of troops to the capital, General Lukomskii assured him that these developments were not unwelcome because they signified the normal operation of the railroads.¹³

During the day, news of fresh mutinies in Moscow and Kronstadt, plus the recognition of the Duma Committee by Admiral

¹⁰ *KA*, xxi, 22-24. See also Lukomskii, pp. 127ff.

¹¹ See the text of the telegram and the comments of the Western Front commander in *KA*, xxi, 32-33. The English version in *RPG*, I, 67, is taken from *IzZh*, Feb. 28, which ascribed it not to Rodzianko but to Bublikov; thus it has come to be known in the literature as "Bublikov's telegram."

¹² *KA*, xxi, 31. Alekseev's "private sources" are not specified, but he could have been referring to a direct wire communication from the Naval Staff Headquarters, which represented the Duma's efforts to restore calm in a favorable light and warned that if the military did not support them, the Workers' Soviet might well brush the Duma aside. More likely, however, Alekseev was simply putting a favorable construction on Bublikov's telegram and other scraps of information as a pretext for halting Ivanov. Since he was seriously risking the tsar's displeasure with this unauthorized communication, it leads one to believe that he had decided at this point to cast his lot with the Duma. See *ibid.*, p. 29.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

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Nepenin, commander of the Baltic Fleet stationed in Helsingfors, persuaded Alekseev to discard all caution. He telegraphed the tsar in care of Pskov (after being interdicted by revolutionary forces, the tsar's train had headed laterally westward to the Northern Front headquarters, hoping to link up with echelons of the expeditionary force), pleading that only a "supreme act" of turning the government over to a person enjoying public confidence could remedy the situation. Any delay might mean that power would go into the hands of the extremists and bring about the end of the dynasty. Copies of the message were sent to the front commanders, and Brusilov and Grand Duke Nicholas immediately replied supporting Alekseev's entreaties. When the unfortunate Nicholas arrived in Pskov that evening, all these messages were layed before him by General Ruzskii, who added his own entreaties. Alekseev, apparently fearing that Nicholas would be so overwhelmed by events that he might take his usual refuge in inaction, wired him the text of a manifesto proclaiming that Rodzianko was to be entrusted with the formation of a new government.¹⁴

Alekseev's bold step succeeded: Nicholas authorized Ruzskii to convey the text of the manifesto to Rodzianko. But in a direct conversation over the wire that lasted most of the night, Rodzianko, still reeling under the impact of the day's events (the soldiers' reaction to his order, the refusal of the Soviet to authorize his train to meet the tsar at Dno, and the mounting antimonarchist agitation), explained to Ruzskii that the proposed solution was no longer adequate, that popular passions had reached their height, and that the "dynastic question has been posed four-square."¹⁵ Ruzskii reported the conversation to Nicholas at a decent hour on the morning of March 2 and firmly voiced his opinion that only Nicholas's abdication could avert a civil war and Russia's military defeat. This was the beginning of the sequence of events that led to Nicholas's abdication twenty-four hours later, after all the front commanders had communicated their supporting opinions.¹⁶ At 3

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53 and *passim*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁶ There are a number of accounts of this episode in the literature (Chamberlin, Pares, and Katkov among the scholars, as well as memoir and hearsay accounts by major and minor participants), not all compatible with one another or the evidence, and no effort will be made to reconcile them here. The most exhaustive and accurate account is that of Melgunov, *Martovskie dni*, pp. 176-85, who rightly ascribes the initiative in polling the front and fleet commanders to Alekseev after he had been informed of

P.M. on March 2 Nicholas signed a telegram to Rodzianko signifying his willingness to abdicate, but when he heard that Guchkov and Shulgin were on their way to Pskov, he requested Ruzskii to hold it up. Ruzskii, however, kept the signed document firmly in his pocket.¹⁷ The protracted negotiations to alter the succession in favor of Michael and the uproar in Petrograd over the Duma's effort to save the monarchy, which in turn brought about Michael's abdication, vexed the dynastic question for two more days.

Alekseev's primary concern was to liquidate the crisis as soon as possible in order to prevent the spread of revolutionary infection to other garrisons, railroad centers, and the front. Each new telegram heralded mutinies and convulsions at some new point—Kronshtadt, Moscow, Reval, Luga, Helsingfors. On March 1 General Kvetsinskii reported that "the front is being flooded with agency telegrams, rumors, and eyewitness accounts from all over . . . so that one is at a loss to distinguish truth from gossip"; he requested a ban on telegraph transmission of orders of the revolutionary government and other news from the capital.¹⁸ Many local commanders took various measures on their own initiative to insulate their units from the rear, such as canceling leaves, forbidding newspapers, and posting officers as watchdogs over telegraph and radio operators. Men returning from leave were debriefed by senior officers and ordered not to speak of what they had seen and heard. Such measures, as the more intelligent commanders well understood, were useless, as they simply created fertile soil for rumors and suspicions that the command was deliberately concealing the truth. Kvetsinskii was advised (but not ordered) by Stavka to strengthen patrols of the railroads and to forbid agitation, but not to prevent the publication of acts of the new government.

Ruzskii's initiative and feared that Nicholas would lapse into indecision. Lukomskii's version (p. 136), which ascribes the genesis of the idea to the encounter between Nicholas and Ruzskii is contradicted by the direct evidence of the staff communications. See *KA*, xxi, 62-63, 67ff., and another version of the telegrams in "Telegrammy i razgovory po telegrafe mezhdru Pskovom, Stavkoi i Petrogradom otnosiashchiesia k obstoiatel'stvam, v koikh proizoshlo otreshenie," *Russkaia Letopis'*, III (1922), 125ff.; the latter were edited by Ruzskii himself, but he makes no comment on the crucial question.

¹⁷ See Ruzskii's claim in *Russkaia Letopis'*, III, 157.

¹⁸ *KA*, xxi, 50.

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In general, Stavka failed to provide clear directives for lower commands because it had counted on a quick political settlement. At midday on March 2 the chief of the Odessa Military District, General Ebelov, complained to Stavka that "in view of the absence of a supreme declaration, the withholding of telegrams from Petrograd, and the circulation of alarming rumors, I request instructions as to when we may expect appropriate directives from above." He warned that in a few days the garrison of raw recruits would be out of hand and suggested returning them to their villages for field work. General Klembovskii replied on behalf of Stavka that important news was expected momentarily and that commanders should hold off publishing telegrams from Petrograd. A short time later he authorized publication of the news that the tsar was in Pskov and would meet with Guchkov and Shulgin.¹⁹

At 4:45 P.M. the same day Stavka advised all fronts to expect in a very short time a supreme act that would calm the population and avoid revolution, and to take measures to prevent excesses in connection with the announcement. But the delay in announcing the abdication until the matter of Michael's succession could be resolved still left the front commanders without guiding directives. In the meantime, military censorship was circumvented in various ways, chiefly through the telegraph operators, who handed on copies of Bublikov's communiqués and news agency reports to known public figures. On March 3 Grand Duke Nicholas authorized a brief notice in the Caucasus on the formation of a new government in advance of the news on the abdication; on March 2 General Ruzskii gave a general order for the Northern Front permitting the publication of news agency telegrams, while Nepenin's order in effect made the news official in Helsingfors and other Baltic ports (Reval, Riga, Libau).²⁰ Except for the Navy, these measures pertained only to the civilian population centers (in areas adjacent to the front the military controlled the censorship). At the front the very impression that Alekseev had hoped to avoid was rapidly materializing, namely, that the military au-

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 76, 78, and the continuation in *ibid.*, xxii, 5.

²⁰ Ibid., xxi, 64, and *Revoliutsiia 1917 g. v istoricheskikh dokumentakh* (Tiflis, 1930), p. 32. Though most of the communications published in this rare work are the same as those in *KA*, xxi-xxii, they are a valuable cross-check, since they represent copies preserved at the staff headquarters of the Caucasus Army, along with related communications with lower commanders.

thorities were suppressing news on political events in Petrograd in the hope of reversing them by military force.



Disorders continued to spread rapidly, particularly in the fleet and garrison towns along the rail lines leading to the front. The Luga garrison had already arrested its chief officers and lifted five of them on their bayonets, including the commandant, Count Mengden (all the victims had German names). Officers who "recognized" the new government were allowed to remain in nominal command. The soldiers had disarmed and brought over to the side of the revolt several train loads of the expeditionary force, which carried the revolutionary virus back to the front when it was ordered on March 2 to return to the Dvinsk sector. Spurred by rumors that the tsar's train was at the Bologoe junction, some soldiers from Petrograd headed there by train, and, not finding the tsar, fanned out along branch lines arresting station guards and police and raising the local garrisons at Rezhitsa and Polotsk to revolt (these points blocked the access route to the north from Mogilev and Minsk). The Northern and Western fronts sent panicky telegrams to Stavka that these "deputies" claimed to represent the new government and inquired whether this was true. Mounted hussars were detached from the front on March 3 in the region of the Fifth Army (near Dvinsk) and instructed to restore order in Rezhitsa, which they succeeded in doing until they themselves became infected by the Revolution. Several lynchings resulted. Alarmed over these incidents, Alekseev ordered all units to watch for "wild revolutionary bands from Petrograd" and to station heavy guards at all railroad points leading to the rear. Such bands were to be captured and the culprits given immediate field courts-martial.²¹

The futility of these draconic orders became evident in the uninterrupted surge of revolutionary actions that engulfed the cities adjacent to the front. In Dvinsk, Vitebsk, and elsewhere the revolutionary forces arrested garrison commanders and police, and formed "committees of public organizations," soviets, civilian militias, etc. Even in Pskov, the headquarters of the Northern Front,

²¹ See "Verkhovnoe komandovanie v pervye dni revoliutsii," *KA*, v (1924), 222-23 (Stavka communications). See also the account of Littauer (pp. 225-31), who took part in the expedition to Rezhitsa.

where the abdication drama had taken place, red arm bands, refusals to salute, and copies of *Izvestiia* with the text of Order No. One appeared on March 4. That same evening a mob (probably returning soldiers of the expeditionary force) disarmed officers at the railroad station and murdered the station commandant.²² On the third fresh mutinies had broken out in the Navy as a direct result of misunderstandings over the abdication. The blue-jackets in Helsingfors and Reval apparently got wind of it via radio messages from Petrograd and suspected their officers of covering it up. By evening Nepenin reported: "Mutiny on battle-ships *Andrei*, *Pavel*, and *Slava*. Admiral Nebolsin murdered. Baltic Fleet as fighting unit no longer exists."²³ (The next day Nepenin himself became a victim.) The southern fronts were still relatively free of such incidents, but the chief of the Caucasus railroad received a wired order from Petrograd to dismiss all railroad gendarmes, which touched off a hasty telegram to Stavka for clarification.²⁴ Such was the situation on March 4, when there still had been no official announcement to military units on the abdication. It should be said on Alekseev's behalf that he made every possible effort to prepare his commanders and to speed up the process by appeals to Petrograd, but without result.

Shortly after midnight on March 3 Alekseev at Stavka and Rodzianko in Petrograd received word that the abdication manifesto had been signed, but altered in favor of Michael. Before abdicating, the tsar had appointed Lvov' (not Rodzianko) to form a new government and Grand Duke Nicholas to take over as Commander in Chief. Thus, the outcome was not the one that had been prepared for and contained a number of grounds for objection: Why the tsar's brother and not his son? Why Lvov' and not Rodzianko? Why another Romanov as Commander in Chief? Could such acts be legal, in view of the abdication? Of course, Alekseev was pleased by the appointment of the grand duke to his old post, as it was thought that his legendary prestige would add a much-needed element of stability. Between 3:00 and 3:30 A.M. on March 3 the front chiefs were given the news of the abdication, and some-

²² See Boldyrev's diary for Mar. 4-6, in *KA*, xxxiii, 256-58, and Gen. M. Bonch-Bruевич, *From Tsarist General to Red Army Commander* (Moscow, 1966), p. 121 and passim. The latter was appointed garrison commander to replace the victim.

²³ *KA*, xxii, 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, v, 224.

time during the night the manifesto itself was transmitted and the machinery of informing the ranks was set in motion.²⁵

At six in the morning, however, Alekseev received a jolting call from Rodzianko, pleading with him to hold up the announcement of the manifesto because passions against the dynasty were such that the Duma Committee had been forced to agree to allow the matter to be deferred to a constituent assembly.²⁶ Reluctantly, Alekseev ordered lower military commanders to hold up action until further instructions. The front chiefs were nearly unanimous in replying that some official statement was urgently needed if the command were to retain credibility with the troops. Ruzskii reported that the manifesto had already been released in Reval and several other places, and that the news would certainly leak through from other sources. Brusilov pleaded for permission to announce at least that the tsar had abdicated and that a new government was being formed, which all were duty-bound to obey (he had already instructed civil and military authorities to obey the new government in order to prevent a breakdown of authority).²⁷ Alekseev assured his front chiefs that a general order to the Army would be given by evening, but bluntly stated that he no longer trusted Rodzianko, as he appeared to be the captive of the Left elements and workers' deputies. He claimed that the situation could be remedied only if the Army intervened with a unified voice, and he proposed for this purpose a conference of front commanders at Stavka a few days hence. "The collective voice of the senior ranks of the Army and their terms, in my opinion, must become known to all and exercise influence over the course of events," was his solemn judgment.²⁸ In the meantime he would demand from Rodzianko that the manifesto be released. This was the first glimmer of the impulse to suspend the traditional view of the Army as "above politics" for the sake of reestablishing authority and discipline, the impulse that was to lead to Kornilovism.

If Alekseev was yielding to an urge to play a political role, he met with little support from his associates. Ruzskii, Brusilov, and

²⁵ Ibid., xxii, 17-18.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 25-27. There are a number of firsthand and secondary accounts of the circumstances that led to Michael's abdication, but see Kerensky, *Turning Point*, pp. 215-16, and Miliukov, *Vospominaniia*, II, 315-19.

²⁷ KA, xxii, 21, 24.

²⁸ Ibid.

Nepenin stated flatly that they could not absent themselves from their posts at so critical a juncture, and obviously looked upon the Duma as a needed emblem of authority.²⁹ Everts, following Alekseev's suggestion, sampled the attitudes of lower commands. General Smirnov, commander of the Second Army, advised that once the decision had been taken to inform the Army of political events, it was then imperative to speak the "naked truth" and not to depart from it or vacillate, since the confidence of the troops in their commanders would otherwise be undermined. General Lesh of the Third Army requested an immediate and decisive order to publish the manifesto before rumors created chaos and confusion. General Gorbatovskii of the Tenth Army wanted the manifesto altered to name Aleksei rather than Michael in order to avoid the risky step of asking soldiers to take a new oath (the oath in the Army had already been taken to both Nicholas and his legitimate heir). Evert accurately summed up the anxieties of military commanders: "The absence of an official declaration to the troops will be interpreted [by the men] as the unwillingness of their commanders to accept the new order and as a form of resistance."³⁰ Moreover, he registered a strong objection to the postponing of the issue until the convening of a constituent assembly; instead he vigorously supported an ultimatum to the new government to publish the manifesto immediately.

Alekseev faced an impassable roadblock to his plans in the person of the new Commander in Chief, the grand duke, who refused to countenance publishing the manifesto and disapproved the candidacy of Michael to the throne or the convocation of a constituent assembly. "In relations with the government," he declared with finality, "I regard myself, and not the collective opinion of the senior commanders, as the expression of the united opinion of the Army and Navy."³¹ (The grand duke never assumed his office: on March 11 he arrived at Stavka, only to be informed that the Provisional Government had decided to replace him with Alekseev.)

Later in the day Alekseev finally got through to Guchkov, from whom he first heard of the real reason for the delay: Michael had refused the throne, and a second abdication text was being worked out, which was to be released together with that of Nicholas. Alekseev's rejoinder, that this new blow would sow more confu-

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 24-26.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

³¹ Ibid., pp. 20, 25. For the grand duke's equally sharp message to Lvov', see *ibid.*, v, 220-21.

sion in the Army and possibly cause a total collapse of morale, prompted Guchkov's laconic reply that he had done his best to prevent it, but what was done was done.³² Later that evening Rodzianko himself conveyed the text of Michael's abdication and the instructions to release both documents immediately. Alekseev refused to be heartened by Rodzianko's buoyant optimism about the rapid return of normal conditions in the capital and the expected uplift in national spirits. Instead, he predicted a long period of intensive work and recuperation before the Army would be able to undertake serious military efforts.

At 2:00 A.M. on March 4 the order went out to the front chiefs to communicate both manifestoes to all military units and civilian authorities in the areas of their command. No separate statement from the newly formed government accompanied the order. Only a passage in Michael's abdication called on all citizens to "obey the Provisional Government, . . . which is endowed with full power until such time as the constituent assembly, to be convened in as short a time as possible on the basis of a universal, direct, equal, and secret vote, expresses the will of the people on the form of government." The covering order stated that these documents were to be read in all companies, squadrons, batteries, and commands.³³



Such was the manner in which the official pronouncement reached the forward units and trenches. A number of front, army, and corps commanders added exhortations of their own, usually that soldiers should maintain order and discipline and continue to fulfill their duty to the fatherland. In spite of the forewarnings, very few units carried out their commission on that same day. In rear headquarters arrangements had to be made for printed copies and appropriate ceremonial reviews; the process of transmission through the lower levels took some time, and at each there was confusion, uncertainty, and requests for supplementary instructions. It was typical for army corps and even divisional headquarters to call conferences of senior officers to discuss how best to handle such a delicate assignment, which occasioned further delays. Thus most announcements to the ranks, whatever form they took, did not take place until March 5.

³² *Ibid.*, xxii, 36-39.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 45. For the text of Michael's abdication, see *RPG*, I, 116.

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In the meantime, the "pantofle post" of orderlies, telegraph operators, and couriers was hard at work, while junior officers congregated in their bunkers and quarters and speculated on what was occurring. Their men were agitated but strangely uncommunicative, suspecting that their superiors were busy with something of great import that they feared to reveal to the ranks. The longer a unit had been exposed to news from the population centers, the more firmly the apprehension was linked to events in Petrograd. On General V. I. Selivachev's sector (Southwestern Front, Eleventh Army, 101st Division in Galicia) the trench soldiers learned of the garrison mutiny in Petrograd and the imprisonment of tsarist ministers through enemy propaganda placards raised over the trenches or leaflets dropped by airplane on March 3, the same day that the general received word of Nicholas's abdication. The order with the abdication manifestoes came through on the fourth, and they were read to the troops on the fifth. Lieutenant General E. K. Miller, commander of the XXVI Corps, Ninth Army in Rumania, was only vaguely aware of the disorders in Petrograd and the dismissal of the Duma before March 3, when he received telegrams on events up to and including Nicholas's abdication; on the fourth his troops observed placards over the Austrian trenches, while he received the texts of the manifestoes and an announcement of the appointment of Lvov' as premier and of Grand Duke Nicholas as Commander in Chief. Miller transmitted them personally to his division chiefs with instructions to announce them to the troops immediately, regardless of the evening hour, which he claims was done.³⁴

A number of accounts recall details of the confused consultations of senior commanders. Colonel Makhrov, commander of the 13th Siberian Rifle Regiment (Twelfth Army, Northern Front) was called to a conference on the abdication at divisional staff headquarters, where each regimental commander was requested

³⁴ See "Iz dnevnika V. I. Selivacheva," *KA*, ix (1925), 105ff., and the manuscript of E. K. Miller's deposition before the Investigative Commission of the Petrograd Military District consequent to his arrest by soldiers of the XXVI Corps, Ninth Army, Rumanian Front, on April 6, 1917. "Pokazaniia gen.-leitnanta E. K. Millera," *HI*, p. 2. (A full record of communications of the Third Infantry Division, Eleventh Army, Southwestern Front, on the abdication, including printed versions of both manifestoes and an order on the announcement to the troops dated March 4, 18:15 hours, was seen by this author in TsGVIA, f. 2333, op. 1, ed. khr. 1.)

to give his opinion. Makhrov recommended a brief verbal announcement, allowing questions from the ranks to avoid misconstructions. Another colonel recommended simply placing the manifesto texts in the orders of the day. The divisional commander, thoroughly perplexed, approved the dominant opinion, which supported Makhrov. Makhrov in turn called a conference of battalion commanders, and company commanders apparently made the announcement to the troops. Makhrov made himself available the following day to answer questions.³⁵ Other commanders, such as Colonel P. N. Shatilov (with a Cossack regiment on the Caucasus Front), preferred to make the announcement to each company or battalion in turn after forming them into ranks (rotating the units in the trenches), for fear that the confusion among lower officers might become too evident. It was not unusual for divisional, regimental, or lower-echelon commanders to lose their self-possession completely, leaving the difficult task of explaining events to subordinates or staff officers. Shatilov's divisional commander assembled his subordinate commanders, but left them to work out matters for themselves. Urged to pull himself together, he simply groaned: "It's all over, Russia is lost!"³⁶ Fedor Stepun was assigned by a flustered superior officer to explain events to his artillery battalion. Such instances are mentioned frequently enough in the literature for one to assume that it was a widespread pattern.³⁷ Many of these helpless commanders appear to have been older, dyed-in-the-wool monarchists who enjoyed reputations as harsh disciplinarians. Their panic might have been due in part to the premonition that, with the removal of the moral underpinning of their authority, they would be exposed to affronts and worse by vengeance-seeking soldiers and junior officers. But perhaps more fundamental was their total unfamiliarity with "politics": when

³⁵ Makhrov, "Razval russkago fronta v 1917 g. i nemetskaia okkupatsiia Ukraina v 1918 g.," MS, in RA, pp. 135-36. Other materials in the same archive will be cited as Makhrov, Documents, with the title or designation of the document.

³⁶ Shatilov, *Memoirs*, RA, p. 525.

³⁷ Stepun, *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia*, II, 8; Ia. Kal'nitskii, *Ot fevralia k oktiabriu. Vospominaniia frontovika* (Moscow, 1926), p. 12 (a pro-Bolshevik junior officer, Eleventh Army, Southwestern Front); Alekseev (pseud.), "Iz vospominanii o fevral'skoi revoliutsii na rumynskom fronte," *LR*, xxii (1927), 68 (soldier in a railroad battalion, Rumanian Front); and Voronovich, *Arkhiv Grazhdanskoi Voyny*, II, 20.

suddenly thrust into the role of explaining a political act of the first magnitude (one, moreover, that went to the heart of their own loyalties), they were at a complete loss.

In only a very few recorded cases did senior officers flatly refuse to follow instructions in announcing the abdications. Most commanders well understood the importance of clarifying the political situation as quickly as possible in order to put an end to unsettling rumors and to turn the troops' attention again to the war. Nearly all available accounts by generals in the field treat the abdication procedure as a matter-of-fact operation, as though no other course of action were conceivable. Boldyrev and Selivachev confided to their diaries their gratification over the abdication; Selivachev's corps commander, however, boasted that he recognized only the Commander in Chief (the grand duke), not the Provisional Government.³⁸ Generals Keller and Khan-Nakhichevanskii, commanders of the Third and the Guards Cavalry corps, respectively, sent telegrams to Nicholas offering to put their troops at his disposal and urging him to renounce his abdication.³⁹ General A. Mosolov, a cavalry division chief on the Rumanian Front, suggested to Alekseev that if the Petrograd garrison refused to take the oath to Michael, then the front army should take "decisive action" to show that "Russian troops cannot live without a tsar." He received a sharp reply: "The legal Provisional Government, in view of the manifesto of Grand Duke Michael Aleksandrovich, must be recognized by the field army, as only then will we avoid a civil war."⁴⁰

In fact, few generals seriously contemplated counterrevolutionary action: the manifestoes appeared to be legal and voluntary, instructions had come through the regular chain of command, and to force the issue by arms could only lead to the collapse of the front and defeat. A conflict of conscience over the oath of loyalty to the tsar was obviated by the fact that Nicholas himself had "appointed" Lvov as premier before abdicating and that Michael's abdication specifically enjoined obedience to the Provisional Gov-

³⁸ Selivachev, *KA*, ix, 110. Selivachev noted that this officer was "a most profound monarchist, partisan of *Russkoe Znamia* [a Black Hundred newspaper], and a Judophobe of the purest water."

³⁹ See Denikin, *The Russian Turmoil* (New York, 1931), p. 58, and *KA*, xxii, 47-48.

⁴⁰ Cited from an archival source by Burdzhilov, *Moskva, Front*, pp. 95-96.

ernment until a constituent assembly could be elected. Most incorrigible monarchists limited themselves to various types of foot dragging, such as requesting endless clarifications over trivia or construing the abdications as "temporary" because Nicholas was physically (or mentally) ill.⁴¹ Colonel N. V. Shinkarenko-Brusilov, who commanded a rifle regiment in Keller's Third Cavalry Corps, claims that among the generals known to him (Wrangel, Mannerheim, Romanovskii, Krymov, and other future Kornilovites), there was not a trace of sympathy for Nicholas personally and that Keller's loyalty was exceptional. They were reconciled to the new government because they believed that it would be dominated by such patriotic figures as Guchkov and Miliukov.⁴²

By March 5 or shortly thereafter the greater part of the Army was thus officially informed of the two most important political developments—the abdications and the formation of the Provisional Government—which put an end to the period of wild speculation and fruitless efforts to withhold the news from the troops. Alekseev instructed front commanders to report to him on how the announcement was received by the troops and the general population.⁴³ Though responses to this order have not been published, a few accounts and diaries refer to them. General Selivachev's regiments reported that "the ranks reacted very calmly, but a few declared outright, 'we knew this [would happen] long ago and expected it.' " They seemed singularly unconcerned about the end of the dynasty. General Miller also remarked on the calm response of his troops.⁴⁴ Denikin noted in his diary:

They express themselves with caution; but three definite currents in the mentality of the men can easily be traced: 1) a return to the past is impossible; 2) the country will receive a

⁴¹ For one such example, see Gen. Wrangel's memoirs, *Vospominaniia generala P. N. Vrangelia* (Frankfurt, 1969), p. 21.

⁴² MS, Shinkarenko-Brusilov, Memoirs, HI, p. 297.

⁴³ KA, xxii, 44. Alekseev forwarded a summary of the replies to Premier Lvov' on March 9 (*ibid.*, v, 233-35), but they are so highly colored by Alekseev's immediate purpose as to be of little use to the investigator. For example, he characterizes the soldiers' reactions as "sad and regretful," "confused and anxious," etc., which he attributes to their sentiment that "we can't get along without a tsar." There is an implied threat that if the Petrograd politicians did not reverse the effect of the dual abdications, the front army might well intervene.

⁴⁴ Selivachev, KA, ix, 19 (diary entry for Mar. 9), and E. K. Miller, MS, p. 3.

Constitution worthy of a great people, probably a Constitutional Limited Monarchy; 3) German domination will come to an end and the war will be victoriously prosecuted.⁴⁵

Although Denikin, like many of his peers, tended to ascribe to the Army as a whole attitudes that were in fact typical of officers only, he accurately noted that the outward calm was accompanied by a "deep thoughtful silence" reflecting an effort to grasp the meaning of events. Several accounts record an unexpected reserve on the part of soldiers toward their officers. One lieutenant remarked: "They don't laugh at my jokes anymore."⁴⁶ Another, who hoped to generate enthusiasm with the announcement of Grand Duke Nicholas's appointment, complained that "again they were silent."⁴⁷ When pressed to ask questions, Colonel Makhrov's soldiers cautiously expressed their puzzlement: "A [new] government? But how is it with power [*vlast'*]? We used to have a government, but power belonged to the tsar. Lvov' is a prince, not a tsar. Who is going to be tsar?" Makhrov patiently explained that a constituent assembly would be called and would decide upon the *form* of government, a monarchy or a republic, which required further long and involved explanations. One soldier finally registered enlightenment: "Look, we elect our *starost'* [village elder] and we can throw him out, but you can't do that to a tsar." Apparently he approved of the idea of a republic.⁴⁸

But even such naive questions did not reveal the soldiers' inmost feelings. Most officers were not aware of how deeply they were mistrusted by their men. The soldiers noted the reticence and confusion with which many officers conveyed the news; they were also aware that the news had been held up for some time and that the officers had discussed it among themselves at length before informing the ranks; and finally, there was the further suspicion that they had not been told everything, that the truth had been deliberately distorted. The versions that the tsar was sick or that he had only temporarily handed power over to the Duma were not convincing and fanned even greater distrust. It was doubtless a serious tactical mistake that the Provisional Government did not, in spite of Alekseev's repeated requests, immediately issue its own solemn proclamation together with the abdications, since

⁴⁵ *Russian Turmoil*, pp. 57-58.

⁴⁶ Chemodanov, p. 73.

⁴⁷ Letter of Mar. 4, in *KA*, L-LI, 198.

⁴⁸ MS, p. 139.

a frequently expressed suspicion was that important pronouncements of the new government were being deliberately suppressed. The thought that was truly uppermost in their minds, the soldiers dared not express to their officers, namely, their hope that these events would lead directly to the end of the war. They ardently tried to construe them thus in their own minds, but they knew that if they asked the officers, they would only be lectured on their patriotic duty to fight to the bitter end. Colonel E. E. Messner, a youthful general staff officer on the Rumanian Front, accurately summed up the situation:

The soldiers began to hold off from the officers because their curiosity was satisfied by the telephonists at night when the officers slept, avidly thrashing things out for themselves and passing the news along the line. A certain alienation between officers and men set in; the officers did not know how to explain events, and the soldiers thought the officers were keeping quiet because they did not want to admit that the war would now end. . . . "They want the war to continue [the soldiers thought] because in wartime they get paid a better salary."⁴⁹

How quickly and easily this suspicion could take on paranoid forms and threaten violence is revealed in a letter of a Pavlovskii guards officer of March 4 (then on the Southwestern Front):

The soldiers don't trust their officers. They don't know which political order we favor or what political tendency; they fear we will surrender our positions to the Germans; they are convinced that we are hiding some sort of new orders, just as they fear that not all units have gone over to the new order; they are tormented by the thought that someone will

⁴⁹ MS, "Vospominaniia," RA, p. 577. Selivachev remarked in his diary for March 10: "I am profoundly convinced that the soldiers now want only one thing—a full stomach and peace—as they are tired of the war and can't be fed any longer with loud phrases on the 'fatherland' or the glory and power of the nation." KA, ix, p. 112. B. V. Sergeev, a captain in the Finlandskii Guards Regiment, also emphasizes the soldiers' secret channels of information and calls them the "pantofle post." See "1917 god na fronte," *Finlandets*, xxxii (Apr. 1956), 32. (*Finlandets* is the émigré journal of former officers of the regiment.) Sergeev had at his disposal his diary of that period and other valuable regimental documents, some of which were accessible to the present author at RA. Together they represent one of the most valuable unpublished sources on front life in 1917.

take away their freedom or betray the fatherland; they believe every ridiculous rumor of the most pernicious origin; they keep their hands on their rifles, and a number of times it has been close to an open clash.⁵⁰

An incident that reveals even more the hidden thoughts that agitated the soldiers is recounted by Fedor Stepun. Already enjoying a reputation as a persuader, he was approached by a group of infantrymen who feared that their comrades were about to lynch their commanding officer. The encounter is worth reproducing in full:

The "conspirators" greeted me without any hostility. Observing their simple and more confused than threatening faces, I was ashamed that I had taken the precaution of bringing my revolver. At first glance it was clear to me that these were not pernicious rebels but ordinary blockheads.

"What's the matter, boys? Speak up!"

Instead of an answer—the typical *muzhik* silence signifying mistrust. I repeated the question to a nearby soldier with an intelligent face. . . .

"How is it, your Honor, now that we have freedom? In Piter [Petrograd] supposedly an order came out making peace, since we don't need anything that belongs to somebody else. Peace—that means going home to our wives and kids. But his Excellency [sarcastic reference to the commander] says: 'Nothing doing: freedom is for those who are still alive after the war. For the time being you'll have to defend the fatherland.' But your Honor, we suspect that our colonel is a rebel against the new regime and is trying to bully us, because he knows the new law is to go into effect that removes us from the front."

"That's the truth," sounded a nearby resolute voice.

Then from the thick of the crowd came even more agitated and embittered voices: "What's the use of invading Galicia anyway, when back home they're going to divide up the land?!" "What the devil do we need another hilltop for, when we can make peace at the bottom?" "Yes, the commander gets a St. George's [Cross] for taking the hilltop, but for that we'll be pushing up daisies!"⁵¹

⁵⁰ KA, L-LI, 199.

⁵¹ *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia*, II, 10.

Stepun managed to calm the men and explain that the Germans were not about to make peace, and that there would not be any land to divide if the front were opened to the Germans. He assured them that the new government expected them to stay at their posts and extracted a solemn vow to that effect (in March it was still relatively easy to turn dangerous situations around by the logic of defending the Revolution). But the confrontation demonstrates that from the very outset the Revolution was intimately associated in the soldiers' minds with land and peace.

The soldiers did not reveal their true reactions immediately; they needed time to turn the confusing events over in their minds and to share their thoughts with their comrades. In the meantime they plied every possible source for additional information—soldiers returning from the rear, newspapers, and their counterparts across no man's land. Even on remote sectors of the Southwestern Front, newspapers from Kiev and Odessa began to arrive by the sixth or seventh, first in rear headquarters and soon thereafter at the front line. The soldiers drank in every word that described events in glowing colors and sang praises to the new freedom. They were impressed that soldiers in the rear were the chief actors in the drama, had their own soviet, and were lavished with praise and attention. The March slogans and mood were picked up with great enthusiasm, much to the dismay of the officers.



Once the soldiers felt they had a grasp of what the Revolution was all about, their joy and enthusiasm knew no bounds, and the urge to celebrate and make visible their newly discovered loyalty could not be constrained. They were especially quick to begin wearing red ribbons and arm bands and to decorate buildings, artillery pieces, and trucks with red banners. The passion first affected front and army headquarters, such as Pskov, Dvinsk, Minsk, and Buczacz, and within a few days spread to corps and divisional headquarters, at which were located the numerous reserve and service units (transport, communications, supply, and medical, and motor and artillery dumps) and front units temporarily relieved of trench duty. Here there was more than adequate time for meetings, speeches, newspaper reading, and celebrations of various kinds.

Soon enough, the demonstrative impulse reached the trenches.

An early issue of an army committee newspaper carries a vivid, if overly grandiloquent, description of the jubilation of the first few days. The soldiers of a unit ordered back to the front lines after a brief rest in the rear requested their commander to acknowledge the new era in some way. A ceremonial review with red banners and prayers for the new government was duly arranged. The affair seemed to be over when the band once again lustily struck up the Marseillaise. But instead, wildly cheering soldiers came back out of their bunkers, threw their caps high in the air, formed ranks without orders, and marched to a small cemetery where fallen comrades were buried. There they dipped their red banners, held a brief mass, and listened to more oratory. Officers and soldiers embraced one another and wept freely. A passing cart driver who asked the reason for the commotion was told: "It's just like at Easter! Officers are embracing their soldiers and we're all headed for the trenches. That's what's happening!"⁵²

Attempts by commanding officers to curb such libertarian practices led to clashes and increased tension. The commanders' initial optimism gave way to dark pessimism as it became increasingly evident day by day that the soldiers were determined to enjoy the new freedom according to their own lights, which in effect meant that the normal forms of military discipline could no longer be maintained. Even before they learned of Order No. One, they saluted less willingly, neglected the prescribed form of address, and systematically ignored military regulations. Attempts to discipline such breaches of etiquette led to clashes and naively impertinent justifications; for example, General Boldyrev's chauffeur thus explained his failure to salute: "The salute pays tribute to the insignia on the shoulder straps, instituted by the tsar; no Tsar-Batiushka, no need for shoulder insignia, and therefore no need for saluting."⁵³ Soldiers frequently took arbitrary actions, such as liberating their arrested comrades from the guardhouse, while junior officers, to avoid complications with their men, with whom they had to live day in and day out, simply looked the

⁵² Recounted in *IzOA*, no. 5 (Apr. 9, 1917). Since this was the organ of the Special Army Committee, the description naturally reflects the optimism over the Revolution cultivated by many committee organs and should not be taken too literally, especially with respect to the eagerness to get back to the front, hand-in-hand with the officers, but the depiction of the dominant mood of festive joy is undoubtedly quite genuine.

⁵³ *KA*, xxiii, 257 (diary entry for Mar. 4).

other way. It soon became obvious that on the lower levels the officers were no longer in control of their men. Officers could easily maintain their popularity by relaxing discipline and displaying their enthusiasm for the new order, but they could no longer overawe by the threat of punishment.

Of the issues agitating the soldiers, none was more widespread than the suspicion that particular officers were either German spies or adherents of the old regime. The former charge was fed by the foreign-sounding names of many officers and the fantastic tales of German influence in high places. For the second charge, there was frequently good cause in the utterances and actions of commanding officers. Colonel Khistofobov, commander of the Pavlovskii Regiment, was overheard screaming into the telephone: "The *svoloch* got their freedom, but we'll settle accounts with them after the war."⁵⁴ Others tactlessly appealed to the tsar's "last wish" that the soldiers obey their lawful superiors and fight on to full victory. In some units the prayers continued to be given in the name of the tsar, and "God Save the Tsar" was sung in the usual fashion, even though orders had been given from higher up to amend such practices.⁵⁵ A number of adjutant generals, such as General Gol'tgoer, commander of one of the guards divisions, continued to wear the tsar's personal emblem on their shoulder straps (the *venzeli*), and word of this quickly spread through the ranks; Brusilov, alert to the importance soldiers attached to such symbols, requested the permission of Stavka to remove his *venzeli* on March 8 (it was promptly granted).⁵⁶ Not all of yesterday's monarchists were so provocative; indeed, they not infrequently adopted extravagant displays of red ribbon and demagogic rhetoric. Often they at-

⁵⁴ Letter of Mar. 11, in *ibid.*, I-LI, 199.

⁵⁵ Brusilov issued a general order for the Southwestern Front on March 4 to substitute prayers for the "ruling council" (actually, the archaic word *sinklit* was used) in place of those for the dynasty. See "Revoluitsiia na fronte," *LR*, x (1925), 70-71. This is a valuable collection of staff documents of the 35th Infantry Brigade of the Seventh Army; unlike most Soviet collections, which select documents at random, this one offers a portrait of a single unit over a period of time and on a variety of questions. Intelligent generals like Selivachev did not wait for a general order, but had the prayers altered suitably as soon as they received word of the abdication. See *KA*, ix, 106. (For an order of the XVII Corps to the Third Infantry Division of March 10 to remove the tsar's portrait from headquarters to avoid incidents, see f. 2333, op. 1, d. 1, l. 31.)

⁵⁶ *KA*, xxii, 66.

tempted to buy popularity cheaply by publicly dressing down subordinate officers for "failure to adapt to the new conditions," but such opportunism did not always save them from the vengeance of their soldiers. Old scores were seldom forgotten.⁵⁷

These phenomena seem to have developed as spontaneous reactions to the official announcement. Although the behavior of the troops was both puzzling and alarming to their superiors, it is conceivable that after a period of unrest, military routine might have been resumed with slight adaptations. But the fires of unrest were constantly being stoked by fresh news from the rear. Not only did the soldiers learn the details of the turbulent events in Petrograd, Helsingfors, and Moscow, but tidings of disorders along the rail lines and towns in the immediate rear were also carried to the front by returning soldiers. Thus they learned that the garrisons in the headquarter towns had helped to disarm the police, had freed civilian and military prisoners, and had publicly celebrated the revolution along with the civilian population. In sum, the soldiers became aware of more fundamental changes in the structure of power in the rear, and this emboldened them to further challenge officer authority.

Almost without exception, the local garrison commandants had been removed by force or by the command structure. Field army commanders were left relatively untouched, even when located in major towns, but they became in effect hostages to local revolutions. General Boldyrev managed to quiet an ugly situation in Pskov by timely intervention. The garrison soldiers had been ordered to appear on parade on March 5 without arms (probably to hear the announcement of the abdication), which put them in a lynching mood with regard to their commandant. Junkers (officer trainees) and military police had been moved into the streets already occupied by soldiers, students, workers, and other civilians, so that a violent confrontation on the main square seemed

⁵⁷ Brusilov, himself an outstanding example of an "adapting" general, promptly announced his conversion to republicanism, for which he was anathematized by émigré monarchists. So also was Shatilov's superior, General Kulebiakin (a former professor in the General Staff Academy, no less), who curried favor with the soldiers at the expense of his subordinate commanders, as did Selivachev's corps commander. Some, such as Bonch-Bruевич, became unprincipled demagogues, while others, such as Makhrov, were talented but principled demagogues. Makhrov's success was an exception, however, as the tactic usually backfired.

likely. At this point Boldyrev pulled up in his staff car and, seeing a red flag with the emblem "Long Live Freedom!" drew loud cheers by shouting the slogan himself. ("At that moment," he mused, "the crowd could be moved either to great exploits or the worst crimes.") He ordered the soldiers to come back later with arms and dressed for parade. The affair turned into a massive local celebration of the Revolution with all the trappings. Even General Ruzskii offered the soldiers a few words of paternal exhortation to express their joy with restraint and order. Nevertheless, the garrison commandant was murdered on the next day, and the pliant, adaptive General Bonch-Bruevich was put in command.⁵⁸

In Dvinsk, headquarters of the Fifth Army, the same type of local revolution led to the arrest of the garrison commandant, General Bezladnov, and all the officers of the aviation park. General Dragomirov, in reporting the incident on March 5, stated that force was out of the question and requested "commissars" from the new government to calm the soldiers and the local population.⁵⁹ Even Mogilev, the location of Supreme Headquarters, was the scene of a revolutionary celebration a few days after the abdication—while the tsar and other imperial personages were still present. It had been arranged by an electrotechnical unit that was to become the core of a local soviet. To avert trouble, Alekseev gave it official sanction, and he himself made a ceremonial review of the troops, many of which sported red ribbons, and appeared on a tribune draped in red banners.⁶⁰ The fact that most front headquarters were located in the midst of local upheavals explains why higher commanders readily made concessions to revolutionary realities in advance of lower levels of command. Red ribbons, neglect of saluting, and abolition of titles were already common practices at army headquarters at a time when regimental and

⁵⁸ See Boldyrev's detailed diary record of March 5 in *KA*, xxiii, 258-59, and Bonch-Bruevich, pp. 121-22. Boldyrev notes that "propaganda of internecine strife between the officer corps and the ranks is spreading along the whole front" and that the officers were "greatly upset over the arrests, and a mass resignation of commands is possible."

⁵⁹ *VOSR: Sverzhenie*, pp. 611, 614-15.

⁶⁰ See Gen. P. K. Kondzerovskii, *V stavke verkhovnogo. 1914-1917* (Paris, 1967), pp. 107-8, and Col. F. Kirkgof, "Vospominaniia adiutanta komendanta Glavnoi Kvartyry Shtaba Verkhovnago Glavnokommanduiushchago," *MS*, in *RA*, n.p. Nicholas had returned briefly to Stavka to take leave of his suite and was met there by his mother.

divisional commanders were still attempting to discipline their men for such things. Some forward lines and remote sectors of the front, such as Rumania and the Transcaucasus, remained unaffected by these innovations for a time, but when they did arrive (by the end of March at the very latest), the effects were just as violent and disorganizing.

By far the most profound shock emanating from the political center was Order No. One. How and by whom the order was transmitted to the front is still a major unresolved question, but there is ample evidence that it became known almost simultaneously on all sectors within a day or so of the abdication. On the Northern Front copies were circulating in Pskov, Riga, and Dvinsk even earlier, as Ruzskii reported to Stavka on March 4; the commanders of the Twelfth and Fifth armies register its appearance in Riga and Dvinsk on March 5; the Seventh Army in Buczacz, Galicia, was broadcasting an official refutation on March 6; the diaries of General Verkhovskii in Sevastopol and Selivachev on the Galician Front show knowledge of it on March 7; and it is clear from other sources (General E. K. Miller, Captain B. V. Sergeev) that it was known on their sectors within a few days of its publication. Order No. One, of course, was addressed to the Petrograd garrison, as the text itself makes very clear. Nevertheless, it was printed in enormous quantities as a separate leaflet, in addition to appearing in *Izvestiia*, so that it traveled along the rail lines along with other literature from the capital.⁶¹ It is known, for example, that copies of Order No. One arrived in Pskov on the same train that brought the Duma deputies Guchkov and Shulgin. On the same day (March 4) that he reported on it to Stavka, General Ruzskii sent one of his adjutants to persuade the leaders of the Petrograd Soviet of its deadly consequences for the front and to have it revoked or modified. He even invited commissars from the Soviet to come to the front to explain the Revolution to the troops and, he hoped, to help restore calm.⁶²

If the early appearance of Order No. One on the Northern Front

⁶¹ *RDRA*, pp. 23-26; *VOSR: Sverzhenie*, p. 613; "Revoliutsiia na fronte," *LR*, x, 76; A. I. Verkhovskii, *Rossiia na Golgofo* (iz *okhodnago dnevnika 1914-1918 g.*) (Petrograd, 1918), p. 71; and Selivachev, *KA*, ix, 111.

⁶² Boldyrev, *KA*, xxiii, 257 (entry for Mar. 4); Bonch-Bruевич, p. 117; Ruzskii to Soviet, Mar. 5, *KA*, xxii, 53; Ruzskii to Alekseev, Mar. 4, *RDRA*, p. 22; and *PSPZ*, p. 18 (session of the Soviet Executive Committee of Mar. 6).

is not surprising, its almost simultaneous appearance on the southern fronts is remarkable. Selivachev records in his diary that a copy was intercepted on March 7 on a soldier returning from Petrograd. But it became known at various staff headquarters by two more direct channels: first, through direct wire from the General Staff Administration in Petrograd, and second, through anonymous radio broadcasts proclaimed "To all, to all, to all!"⁶³ The precise time cannot be documented, but it was certainly known by the sixth or seventh, as by then the command structure at all levels and on every front was very much exercised over its possible influence. Its potential effect on the troops, which were already very much unsettled by events, was all too obvious. Because it was labeled an "order" and came through the official communications network, even many commanders began to wonder whether it was meant to be an official announcement.⁶⁴ An exchange of telegrams with their superiors usually clarified the matter, but word leaked out to the ranks through communications personnel. In the Finlandskii Guards Regiment, for example, a soldier was detained on about March 7 with the text written on the back of a telegraph blank. By nightfall the entire regiment knew of it and was discussing how it should be implemented.⁶⁵ Obviously, the telegraphists realized that an "order" of this sort should not be passed on to the officers.

Countless incidents are recorded during the first few weeks of the Revolution that may or may not have been inspired by the injunctions of Order No. One, but when generals' and officers' memoirs inevitably come to this subject, it assumes the quality

⁶³ On the latter, see E. K. Miller, MS, p. 4, and on the former, see examples below.

⁶⁴ See Lukomskii, pp. 147-48. Lukomskii, who received communications on it from all armies, affirms that it was transmitted via the network of the General Staff. See also Kerensky, *Turning Point*, p. 203, and Guchkov, "Iz vospominanii A. I. Guchkova," *Poslednye Novosti*, Sept. 20, 1936.

⁶⁵ See Baron P. Klodt, "Lichnye vospominaniia," *Finlandets*, xxvi (Dec. 1937), 16-17, and Sergeev, *ibid.*, xxxii (Apr. 1956), 32. (Several staff communications between the headquarters of the Grenadier Corps and lower commands of March 7-9 [f. 2327, op. iv, d. 1, ll. 367, 371, 377, 267-68] reveal that Order No. One was received via the radio and telegraph apparatus of the staff, and caused considerable consternation among the command to clarify its origin and validity. The full text of the order, on staff paper, is in the file. At least one commander felt that even its prescriptions on saluting should be observed, in order to avoid conflicts with the soldiers.)

of an almost mystical, intangible evil, nowhere, yet everywhere sapping the foundations of the Army. That the officers were not privy to the mode of dissemination is not surprising, as for the ordinary soldier the order primarily expressed a joyful feeling of inner liberation, to which they expected the officers to be hostile, and therefore they relished it in secret. Now they were authorized to have organs expressing their own will, they no longer needed to suffer passively the fist pounding, the verbal abuse, and the demeaning *ty*, even weapons were now to be under *their* control—all this added up to a revolution in the relations between the soldiers and their officers and deprived the latter of those ultimate means to enforce their authority. Doubtless the front soldiers, weary of the war and often in a state of incipient paranoia that the officers would spill their blood in reckless actions, grasped even more frantically than soldiers of the rear at this affirmation of their dignity and power. V. G. Knorin, a prominent Bolshevik in the Minsk Soviet, accurately characterized it as “that charter of liberties that was so perfectly understood and adopted by the soldiers.”⁶⁶ The generals reacted violently and perhaps in an exaggerated fashion against the order because they well understood its intrinsic appeal and ultimate consequences. There is little difference in this respect between the versions of future Red and White generals. In Denikin’s view:

Order Number One was disseminated rapidly and everywhere along the whole front and in the rear, because the ideas which it embodied had developed for many years, in the slums of Petrograd as well as in the remote corners of the Empire, such as Vladivostok. They had been preached by all local army demagogues and were being repeated by all the delegates who visited the front in vast numbers and were provided certificates of immunity by the Soviet.⁶⁷

The future Red commander Bonch-Bruевич, though shifting the emphasis, is just as categorical in his estimate of its consequences:

⁶⁶ *1917 god v Belorussii i na zapadnom fronte* (Minsk, 1925), pp. 13-14. For an identical characterization of the order from the opposite end of the political spectrum, see Budberg MS, p. 982. Budberg notes, as do others, that most of the points were familiar to him from 1905 in the Far Eastern Army (he was a commander in Vladivostok during the turmoil there).

⁶⁷ *Russian Turmoil*, p. 63.

THE REVOLUTION AT THE FRONT

It was clear to me that this order . . . smashed at one blow the machinery with the aid of which we, generals and officers of the Army, had succeeded in maintaining subordination and imposing our will on millions of resentful armed men deeply disillusioned by the war.⁶⁸

Another future Red commander, General A. I. Verkhovskii, reflected in his diary for March 7 the visceral reaction of the generalship: "Cursed be the man who conjured up this abomination. . . . The gentlemen in Berlin must be very happy."⁶⁹ Certainly, the various phenomena that were disrupting the Army in early March cannot all be ascribed to Order No. One, and it took some time for the full impact of its ideas to be felt, but that it had reached a considerable number of units on all fronts by mid-March and accelerated incipient tendencies toward certain concrete forms of organization and activity, there can be no doubt. The astoundingly rapid and ubiquitous formation of soldiers' committees from the company level up, which had to be countered by their official recognition from above, is incomprehensible without it.

The Soviet Executive Committee, for its part, constantly vacillated on the question of Order No. One once it realized the decree's potential impact. On March 4 General Potapov requested, on behalf of the Military Commission, that the Executive Committee issue a second "order" stating that the first applied only to the capital and did not provide for the election of officers (a widespread misunderstanding). The request set off a passionate discussion in the Soldiers' Section of the Soviet, which finally yielded to the entreaties of the Executive Committee.⁷⁰ The new order indeed clarified the point about the election of officers, but it also negated the effect by affirming the validity of elections that had already taken place and stating that the question would be

⁶⁸ Op. cit., p. 118.

⁶⁹ *Na Golgofo*, p. 71. In Russian, the first phrase reads: *Bud' proklat chelovek, pridumavshii etu gadost'*. It should be noted that this work represents Verkhovskii's personal diary of 1917 and deviates considerably from his memoirs, *Na trudnom perevale* (Moscow, 1959), which were published long after he had made his career as a Red commander. Naturally this reaction is not recorded in the later work, which is otherwise obviously heavily edited.

⁷⁰ PSPZ, p. 16 (session of Mar. 6), and IzPS, Mar. 6, 1917.

taken up by a special governmental commission; in the meantime, individual units could petition the Military Commission for the removal of particularly objectionable officers. Although it claimed authority for the Soviet over the soldiers' committees only on questions touching *political* topics, it shed no new light on the delicate issues of the control of weapons and the applicability of Soviet orders outside Petrograd.

Potapov apparently thought that even this two-edged clarification would offset the worst effects of Order No. One at the front, for he had it broadcast as "Order No. Two" by telegraph and radio to all front headquarters under his own signature as head of the Military Commission.⁷¹ His action only made matters worse, since it reinforced the impression that the Soviet could issue orders via the official media *with* the imprimatur of the Military Commission. Complaints to Stavka over the unsettling effects of these unauthorized orders continued to pour in, moving Alekseev to step up his remonstrances to the Provisional Government. On March 5 he protested that "certain elusive elements" were creating soldiers' committees at the front and presuming the right to introduce changes in military life; the government should forbid unauthorized deputations to the front and solemnly declare that henceforward all changes in military orders should proceed only through Stavka and with its consent. On the following day he addressed himself specifically to Order No. Two:

For the Army only the orders of the Provisional Government are obligatory, and the directives of an unknown body not belonging to the government—the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies—are not binding and will not be published. With sorrow I must add that my frequent suggestions to the government on such matters have remained unanswered.⁷²

As for the government and the Soviet, each responded to the situation in its own way. The Soviet tried for several days to contact Guchkov to discuss the election of officers, but the War Minister systematically avoided them. Faced with the pressure from Stavka to control the actions of the Soviet, which he realized was beyond his strength, he consented to a meeting on the sixth, during which

⁷¹ Text in *RPG*, II, 851-52.

⁷² *KA*, v, 228. For his other protests to the Provisional Government, and also those of the grand duke, see *ibid.*, pp. 222, 225-28.

he several times threatened to resign if the Soviet did not desist from its presumptuous actions (one can assume that he took exception to Potapov's initiatives). But as so frequently happened in those days, both sides became suddenly conciliatory short of the breaking point, as each realized that it could not do entirely without its rival. The Soviet representatives agreed to publish a proclamation to the front calling for harmony between officers and men and strict observance of discipline when on duty, and stating once and for all that Soviet orders were meant to apply only to Petrograd. Guchkov, for his part, agreed to make changes in military regulations in order to confer a dignified civil status on soldiers and to set up a commission to consider broader reforms. The proclamation embodying these points was countersigned by both Potapov and Guchkov. It must have been transmitted in the same fashion as the two previous orders, since General N. N. Golovin of the Seventh Army in Galicia ordered it published in the area under his command on March 8.⁷³ To placate Stavka, Guchkov published a proclamation of his own to the Army on the seventh, which affirmed that "no changes in the military order or command structure are to be undertaken other than on direct order by the Provisional Government through the authorized Supreme Military Authority." This was the solemn pronouncement for which Alekseev had been pleading for so many days; accordingly, he ordered its immediate circulation to all units.⁷⁴

On March 7 Guchkov issued his Orders Nos. 114 and 115 in pursuance of his agreement with the Soviet of the previous day. Order No. 114 abolished most of the outward practices and regulations presumed to reflect the inferior civil status of soldiers and instituted new ones based on the idea of full and equal citizenship. It followed Order No. One in authorizing the use of "Mister" for all grades of officers in place of the archaic honorific titles of address, and in obliging officers to use *Vy* when addressing soldiers; likewise, it lifted the prohibitions against smoking on the street, riding inside streetcars, and visiting places of public entertainment.

⁷³ Text in *RDRA*, p. 29, and *IzPS*, Mar. 8. For Golovin's order, see *LR*, x, 82-83. Other details are in sources already cited.

⁷⁴ Guchkov's order was transmitted on March 8 to lower commands of the Western Front by Gen. Kvetsinskii (see *VOSRB*, II, 99-100). That it was transmitted to the regimental level is confirmed by the daily orders of the 329th Buzuliiskii Regiment of March 11, in *TsGVIA*, f. 2938.

Although it did not explicitly proclaim full civil rights for soldiers, it did grant the right to attend clubs and meetings and to join political associations. The other modifications, most commanding officers were willing to swallow, but the last point violated what most professional military men regarded as axiomatic—that the Army should remain above politics in serving the aims of the state. Order No. 115 announced the formation of a special commission under General Polivanov to review the full range of military regulations and to bring them into conformity with the principles of the new state order. Guchkov candidly states in his memoirs that he agreed to the commission merely “to gain time” and that he hoped that further reforms could be talked to death.⁷⁵ (Though soldiers had great hopes for this commission, Guchkov’s maneuver was by and large successful.) Orders Nos. 114 and 115 were sent through the chain of command over the next few days, causing as much consternation among commanders as Order No. One and providing new occasions for misunderstandings with their men.



The repeated shocks from the rear and the sudden disregard of normal forms of military practice led many generals and officers to the conclusion that the Army was about to collapse. There were in fact many signs of incipient anarchy: the reported lynchings, a flood of desertions to the rear, frequent arrests and forcible removals of officers, chaos on the railways, and the inability of officers to enforce their orders. However, at the front such forebodings were premature. Almost all the lynchings occurred in the rear, the highest incidence being in the Baltic Fleet and Petrograd, and the remainder in garrisons along the railway lines. Brusilov boasted that not a single instance took place on his front, and in spite of great tension, excesses were avoided in the Black Sea Fleet by the timely concessions of Admiral Kolchak.⁷⁶ Most ar-

⁷⁵ Op. cit. For the text of both orders, see *RPG*, II, 853-54.

⁷⁶ Brusilov, p. 290, and *KA*, xxii, 57. Official data on the number of deaths by lynching are available only for the Baltic Fleet: 60 at Kronshtadt, 39 at Helsingfors, and 6 for the balance of the fleet. See the report by Lukomskii, cited in Shliapnikov, III, 137. A government commissar at Kronshtadt who is also a good source, Pepeliaev, informed the Soviet Executive Committee that the Kronshtadt figure was 100 (*PSPZ*, p. 37). Although there are at least 8 to 10 verifiable instances in the Petrograd garrison, the number could not have been much more than 20; General Martynov (pp. 149-50), making use of materials of the Extraordinary Investigative Commission, puts the

rested officers were brought to corps and army headquarters under convoy, not infrequently under the command of a junior officer, where they were unobtrusively released and sent farther to the rear for their own safety. The soldiers were not indiscriminate in removing their superiors and happily submitted to popular and respected officers. Others were left in nominal command under the watchful eye of improvised committees. The majority of junior officers soon worked out a *modus vivendi* with their men and avoided clashes wherever possible. The degree of discipline varied from unit to unit, but seldom did it collapse completely.

Desertions were perhaps the most alarming form of disorganization in the first few weeks. Trains moving to the rear were jammed with soldiers. Stationmasters and signalmen were abused for holding up trains or refusing to add extra carriages. Breakdowns due to overloading and interference with dispatching threatened complete chaos. The cities in the rear teemed with unattached soldiers, who bullied civilians, foraged at will, and reacted violently against attempts to take them into custody. Although the strain on the railways was great—at one time it was estimated that a thousand deserters a day were pouring into the Kiev railway station—the rate per front unit was not particularly alarming. General Lukomskii estimated that on the average each division was losing five to seven men per day, which, if extended to the whole Army for the month of March would amount to 100,000 to 150,000 from an army of 7,500,000. He ascribed the high incidence to the widespread rumors of the impending division of the land, which peasant soldiers were so eager to believe.⁷⁷ Many of them were also stirred up by horrifying stories that landowners were burning villages and grabbing peasant lands to forestall such action by the new government. Once they had seen their families alive and well, many of the deserters returned voluntarily to their units. In March, few villages willfully harbored deserters, and efforts were made by local authorities, often with the cooperation of local soviets and garrison troops, to round up deserters and facilitate their return. A flurry of resolutions by various military units appeared in the

number of deaths of officers from all causes at 53, and the majority of them must have been victims of the street fighting. The present author has not encountered in any of the material he has surveyed a single verifiable instance of lynching on the front lines in the first half of March (a few occurred in April and May).

⁷⁷ See SS, Apr. 2, 1917.

metropolitan press in the latter half of March to the effect that deserters who did not return by a particular date would be declared "adherents of the old regime." The mood of the Army in March, notwithstanding the hopes for peace, was still defensist, and countless resolutions declared that to "open the front to the enemy" by deserting was tantamount to "betrayal of the Revolution."⁷⁸

A more pervasive and symptomatic form of disorder was the unremitting flow of arrests of officers of all grades, but particularly of senior commanders, and their replacement by more popular candidates. In the first week of March this phenomenon was confined to rear garrisons and depots, but by March 10 it was widespread at the front lines and continued to be so throughout the rest of March and beyond. Sensing the helplessness and confusion in the command structure and strongly identifying with the new regime, the soldiers felt they were "defending the Revolution" when they arrested officers suspected of hostility. Sometimes the arrests were triggered by provocative statements by senior officers, as when the commander of the 614th Infantry Regiment, Colonel Medvedkov, chided his soldiers that "your government" and "your Soviet of Workers' Deputies" were idly celebrating the Revolution instead of sending shell. A junior officer assembled the regiment, carried out the arrest efficiently and without violence, and sent the colonel to corps headquarters under guard.⁷⁹ But the most frequent occasions for arrests were trivial incidents over tardy removal of the tsar's portrait or insignia, delays in publishing real or fictitious orders of the new government, misunderstandings over the oath of loyalty to the Provisional Government, and attempted disciplinary actions over wearing red ribbons or failing to salute. More often than not, it was a combination of the above, and the immediate pretext, on closer examination, was not the underlying cause.

There are somewhat over a dozen confirmed instances of the forcible removal of regimental commanders at the front on such grounds in the month of March. One can suppose that several times that number went unrecorded, not to speak of timely changes

⁷⁸ Most of the information here has been culled from the metropolitan press for the latter half of March, in which desertion is a major theme, though often exaggerated. About a dozen resolutions condemning deserters appeared in *IzPS*. An attempt to deal with the phenomenon quantitatively is made in Chap. IX below.

⁷⁹ Report of Gen. P. S. Baluev, commander of the Special Army, to Brusilov, Mar. 29, *RDR*, pp. 46-47.

to avoid unpleasantness and still other attempts that did not succeed.⁸⁰ While not the mass phenomenon it was in the rear, the arrests at the front reflect the broad deterioration in the authority of the command structure and afford an insight into the general conditions that brought it to the verge of collapse. Most of these incidents are documented by a single source that usually does not go far toward revealing underlying causes or ultimate resolution. Nevertheless, a complete set of depositions taken by a military prosecutor allows an illuminating paradigm in the case of the arrest on March 10 of a Colonel Gafner, commander of the 520th Fokstanskii Infantry Regiment (XXXI Corps, Third Army, Western Front).⁸¹

The testimony of all the witnesses—soldiers, NCOs, junior and senior officers—agrees that the soldiers heard of Guchkov's Order No. 114 on March 8 or 9 through newspaper accounts, that on the evening of the ninth several enlisted men greeted Colonel Gafner in the new fashion as "Mister Colonel," that he severely reprimanded them for this (some witnesses claimed that he called them *svoloch* [scum] and struck one of the offenders, others that he spoke disparagingly of the new regime), that late in the evening a rumor spread that a group of officers from a neighboring regiment was about to "open up the front to the enemy," that they had almost been caught but had been given refuge by Colonel Gafner, and finally, that the soldiers descended in the darkness en masse on the regimental headquarters and arrested their commander. Although there were cries to exercise justice on the spot, the crowd by and large maintained order, allowing Colonel Gafner to appoint their favorite officer, Lieutenant Colonel Klimov, as temporary commander; Gafner and seven or eight other officers

⁸⁰ Since I shall allude to many of these incidents below, specific references are omitted here. About a third of the recorded instances occurred in the guards regiments, several more in cavalry units; a similar number were connected with the taking of the oath to the Provisional Government. But this is more likely to reflect the availability of documentation than the true distribution. Unfortunately, staff sources provide data only for a later period, by which time the phenomenon had grown considerably. See, for example, a report for the Western Front of July 15 (*RDRA*, pp. 217-21), which lists 10 senior officers as having been removed by force, and a further 35 as having departed "in consequence of expressions of lack of confidence." Some of these instances are known to have occurred in the period under consideration.

⁸¹ See TsGVIA, f. 2241. Since most of this 85-page document is used here, further references are omitted.

who opposed the action were placed in the guardhouse. The next day the corps and division commanders arrived on the scene and tried unsuccessfully to secure their release by persuasion. Major General D. A. Danilov finally obtained the prisoners' release, but had to concede that Gafner would not return to the regiment and that Klimov's nomination would stand. The accusations against Gafner, aside from harboring the mysterious officers, were his harsh discipline, his free use of fists, his failure to execute Order No. 114, and finally, "adherence to the old regime." All the soldiers interrogated in this affair admitted their participation in the incident and their belief in the validity of the accusations, but stoutly denied that there were any agitators or instigators of the affair, nor could they identify those carrying out the arrest (it was dark, of course, and no one could be recognized). The officers, including the new commander, supposedly concurred.

A close examination of the evidence, however, modifies the dominant version in significant respects. First of all, the rumor concerning the officers of the neighboring regiment cannot be regarded as the primary reason for the arrest. Suspicion that officers, individually or collectively, might treacherously open up the front was widespread both before and after the Revolution (the "German stranglehold" syndrome). In this particular instance, however, it flared up just when the men were already in a frame of mind to arrest their commander for supposedly suppressing Order No. 114. Once the arrest had been accomplished, the subject of harboring the mysterious officers was quickly dropped and was not even mentioned among the accusations reported to General Danilov the following day.

Clearly, the soldiers would not have reacted so swiftly had the ground not been well prepared by the colonel's known hostility to the new government and his longstanding reputation for foul epithets, fist pounding, and harsh discipline. One deposition states quite explicitly that "as soon as we heard of the Revolution and that freedom was everywhere in Russia, we thought we would have to arrest Colonel Gafner." Apparently, his refusal to recognize the provisions of Order No. 114 was in their eyes the final irrevocable "proof" of old-regime sympathies. One must say that the soldiers allowed their colonel very little time to execute the order. It was released on March 7 in Petrograd, and the men confronted Colonel Gafner with its announcement in the *Vestnik Osoboi Armii* (a staff newspaper) of March 9, that is, on the day the incident oc-

curred. Colonel Klimov testified (and he seems to be the most reliable of the witnesses) that Gafner had published all orders emanating from the government through the chain of command from the very first day and that the announcement of the abdication had followed the prescribed procedure without incident. When the corps commander admitted openly to the soldiers that he, not Gafner, had held up the order (until certain fine points were cleared up), they still refused to release Gafner and made no effort to arrest the corps commander, although they undoubtedly could have done so (in several depositions he also figures as an "adherent of the old regime"). It is quite clear, then, that even when satisfied on all other questions, the soldiers were determined to secure the removal of Colonel Gafner, and they willingly released the other officers when General Danilov agreed to it. Klimov himself felt that the rumors were mere pretext and that the men were taking vengeance for longstanding grievances. And like many other victims of arrests, the colonel conveniently bore a German name.

At the same time, the arrest was undoubtedly more than a matter of personal vengeance: Colonel Gafner was simply the most visible representative of the deeply resented structure of military authority, which used the soldiers as cannon fodder for obscure purposes of its own. Though most depositions kept carefully to the basic script, one platoon sergeant expressed openly what many were undoubtedly thinking:

What really upset us and made us think that the officers were against the new government was that they told us nothing about the changes going on in the government; they only declared that the tsar renounced the throne along with Grand Prince Michael Aleksandrovich, and that ministers are running the government. In general they didn't explain anything to us, and we found out about everything through the newspapers.

It is clear that in the soldiers' minds a revolution in authority had occurred from their determination to force through their own choice of commander, who himself was not allowed to speak alone with the prisoners but was obliged to bargain for their release with representatives of the ranks. Moreover, the corps and division commanders were obliged to accept the *fait accompli*, indicating that authority must have been shaken in all units under their com-

mand, for surely they would otherwise have undertaken to disarm or disband the rebellious regiment.

Finally, the universal chorus of the absence of instigators and organizers arouses suspicion. A mob seldom behaves resolutely unless a core of leaders is present to focus consensus and give direction to their efforts. If there had been no such group, the unfortunate colonel would undoubtedly have been lynched. Several pieces of evidence suggest the presence of a functioning group throughout the incident: Gafner's arrest had been discussed earlier (by whom?), Klimov was suggested readily as a replacement, and representatives were available to confer with Klimov. Moreover, the depositions of a number of witnesses, most of them NCOs from the same company, duplicate one another so exactly, even in phrasing, that it suggests an agreed-upon scenario. Gafner himself credits several NCOs with preventing the calls for violence from being fulfilled. It is at least plausible that a group of sergeants who had felt the brunt of their commander's humiliating methods and sometimes had the unpleasant task of executing them, agreed ahead of time that his removal was desirable and capitalized on this incident to realize their goal. They and the mass of soldiers understood the necessity of collective anonymity to avoid reprisals against the initiators (which had indeed for centuries been a part of the folk tradition of protest in Russia). If Klimov or other officers knew the identity of the leaders, they preferred not to notice, as they well understood that they could no longer exercise influence over the mob without the latter's help. However this may be, the process whereby elective bodies arose spontaneously out of the chaos and confusion over the new political order without necessarily being inspired by Order No. One is clearly visible. (Klimov mentions that the *Izvestiia* of the Petrograd Soviet was circulating among the soldiers, so Order No. One could have been known; but then it is interesting that the soldiers appealed to the orders of the new government, rather than to the Soviet, in attempting to legitimize their actions.) "Dual authority" here, as in Petrograd, arose primarily as a byproduct of the turbulence of events, not as the negation of military order but as a revolutionary surrogate.



Order No. 114 provided only one of the typical occasions leading to the arrests of officers. A good many more were connected

with the taking of the oath of loyalty to the Provisional Government. A strikingly large number of units refused to take the oath on one pretext or another, or proceeded with the ceremony only after extensive explanations and persuasion. In several verifiable instances the forcible removal of commanding officers resulted. Once again the Provisional Government's failure to act with circumspection and dispatch unnecessarily damaged its own image and undercut the authority of commanders at the front. The text of the oath for the armed forces was approved by the Provisional Government on March 7 and published in the capital on March 9; it apparently went through the chain of command between the tenth and the twelfth, as by the latter date many units were administering the oath.⁸² The wording closely followed the oath to the tsar, except that the "Russian State (*Rossiiskoe gosudarstvo*) and its present head, the Provisional Government" replaced the imperial sovereign as the object of loyalty. The subject, as before, was to swear obedience to his superior officers and, "before God and conscience," to seal the oath with the sign of the cross (crescent for Moslems, etc.). But this time he had also to append his *written* signature.

A number of severe drawbacks in this form of the oath soon became evident. First, the unprecedented requirement of a written signature aroused great alarm, and in numerous cases outright refusal. Since not enough copies of the oath had been printed, the soldiers were in many cases simply signing a blank piece of paper, and in any event, the mass proceedings allowed no opportunity to read what was to be signed. To be sure, the oath was read aloud by a priest, but its meaning was incomprehensible without lengthy explanations, and the soldiers trusted the priests as little as the officers. Frequently, they felt they were signing away their newly acquired freedom or swearing anew to the former tsar. They sometimes caught at the word *gosudarstvo* (state) which they under-

⁸² The text was first published in *VVP*, Mar. 9. On Mar. 12 the members of the Soldiers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet voted to reject this version of the oath because it included no specific reference to the obligation to defend the Revolution and freedom and because it violated freedom of conscience by employing traditional religious forms. *IzPS*, Mar. 14. Their resolution not only called for a renegotiation of the text, but also declared the oath null and void where already administered. This declaration does not appear to have greatly affected the front, since it came too late to influence the various crises.

stood to signify *gosudar'* (sovereign or lord, a title for the tsar). Many were upset over the pledge to obey their superior officers, whom they suspected of disloyalty to the new regime.

The extreme anxiety over the signature in place of the customary verbal assent can be traced to the enduring reluctance of the peasant to sign any document for fear of being deceived. In a number of instances the first obstacle was the officers' attempt to conduct the proceedings under the regimental banner on which the tsar's emblem was superimposed. Either it had to be replaced by a red banner or the emblem had to be removed, unless an eloquent commander could persuade a skeptical audience that it stood for the exploits of the regiment and not the form of government. Frequently, clashes were provoked by the appearance of units and individuals at the ceremony with red ribbons and banners. Some officers swallowed this affront to the uniform, but others refused to proceed until they were removed. Nothing could polarize a situation more quickly than for an officer to refer to the red banners as "rags" or "babushka's underwear."

The usual proceeding for the oath was that all units not manning the trenches were ordered to assemble in parade formation in an open area where a solemn mass would be held before the text of the oath was read; the commander then might ask for questions, or spokesmen of specific units would inform him that they declined to participate until specific points were clarified or confirming inquiries undertaken. In a number of instances the oath was administered twice, first for those willing to do so without question, and a week or so later for those who had raised objections, which in the meantime were satisfied. Often the soldiers requested confirmation by representatives of the new government or permission to send a deputation to Petrograd or some other political center, where it was felt the truth could be confirmed; sometimes these requests were honored, sometimes not. To document all the variations would be too lengthy, but a few examples will suffice. The commander of the XI Army Corps reported on March 13 to Eighth Army Headquarters (Southwestern Front) that units of the 11th Division refused to sign the oath because they were convinced that it committed them to the old order. All the efforts of senior officers, and even of the division commander, to persuade them to the contrary were to no avail:

The affair dragged out until evening, when shots were fired,

and the staff of the division was surrounded by sentinels [that is, of the rebellious soldiers]. . . . The soldiers demanded a car to take delegates to Chernovitsa [Eighth Army Headquarters]. This morning I became convinced that restoring order would not be easy. At 15 hours the 42nd Regiment was lined up in full order and General Bachinskii again addressed them in a passionate speech, after which the regiment swore to serve faithfully as before, but nevertheless requested permission to send delegates to Petrograd to confirm whether all the liberties granted them had been announced. I refused to grant this request.⁸³

The mental reservations that often led the peasant-soldier to such actions are expressed in a letter addressed to the Petrograd Soviet by a bombardier of the 121st Artillery Division:

Everyone is willing to take the oath, but they don't agree to put down their signature. You ask why? The reasons are the following: (1) we might thereby lose our long-sought freedom, (2) wouldn't we be taking on certain obligations for the future after our discharge, as for example, on the question of the land?—[the government might say:] "You gave your signature to obey the government in everything unquestioningly," and then refuse our demands. We request that you answer this question for us.⁸⁴

It is quite possible that this unarticulated concern over the fate of the land was the primary reason behind many of the refusals to sign the oath. In all these affairs the soldiers appeared willing, even eager, to swear allegiance to the new government, but they feared deception on the part of the officers and commitment to unknown conditions.

In most cases the incidents were cleared up after long delays and repeated assurances, but all too frequently they ended in arrests. In the *Finlandskii Guards Regiment* the machine gunners

⁸³ *RDRA*, p. 34. Also in the Eighth Army, the 127th Infantry Regiment refused to take the oath under a banner with Nicholas's emblem and sent a telegram to Guchkov to this effect. They complained that their commander had referred to their red banner, which they wished to substitute for the occasion, as a "rag." Letter of Mar. 19, in *VOSR: Sverzhenie*, pp. 640-41.

⁸⁴ *VOSR: Sverzhenie*, p. 629.

refused to take the oath and trained their guns on the ceremonial field, threatening to shoot if the proceedings were not stopped. The grounds were the typical ones: confusion over the term *gosudarstvo*, the tsar's emblem on the regimental banner, and the affixing of the signature. The explanations of the regimental commander, Baron P. Klodt, produced no effect whatsoever. It is clear from his and other accounts that the impasse was only a pretext to secure his removal, and that his reputation as a disciplinarian and inveterate monarchist was at the bottom of it. Consulting with the officers of his regiment, who agreed that his presence was an obstacle to the restoration of tranquility, he requested a transfer, which was quickly granted. He was able to leave the regiment in safety, according to a witness, only because he was provided with a guard by a newly formed committee and accompanied by a popular officer, Colonel Slashchev. Klodt himself suggested to the division commander, General Gol'tgoer, that Slashchev be appointed as his successor, bypassing a more senior but less popular colonel.⁸⁵ Other émigré sources reveal that incidents over the oath taking led to the forced removal of commanders in a number of guards regiments, including the Egerskii, the Moskovskii, and the Preobrazhenskii.⁸⁶ Such incidents reflect both the soldiers' wish to be certain that they were indeed pledging themselves to the new order and their lack of trust in their commanders, particularly when the latter were insensitive to the symbiotic details that in the soldiers' minds authenticated the proceedings.

It was not at all clear at mid-month whither events were tending, but that the Revolution had stirred the peasant-soldiers to the depths, there could be no doubt. The soldiers were fully aware that a new power existed in Petrograd to which they could link their aspirations for land and peace. More immediately, at the front they understood the Revolution as an unqualified overturn of officer authority, which in their minds was but an extension of their subjection to cultured, propertied society generally. The dejected Pavlovskii officer who so carefully recorded the litany of

⁸⁵ For two accounts of this incident, see Klodt, *Finlandets*, xxvi, 18ff., and Sergeev, *ibid.*, xxxii, 32ff.

⁸⁶ See V. Kamenskii (ed.), *Leibgardia v voynu 1914-1917 g.g.* (Paris, 1954), pp. 199ff.; the diary of G. Klimovich, "L. Gv. Moskovskii polk v voynu 1914-17 gg.," *Biulleten' L.Gv. Moskovskogo Polka*, no. 130 (Sept. 1951); and the diary of O. P. Mitrofanov, MS, in RA (entries for Mar. 12, 13, and 17).

suspensions that soldiers harbored toward their officers well understood the underlying reasons:

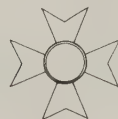
Between us and them is an impassable gulf. No matter how well they get on with individual officers, in their eyes we are all *barins*. When we talk about the *narod*, we mean the nation; when they talk about it, they understand it as meaning only the democratic lower classes. In their eyes, what has occurred is not a political but a social revolution, which in their opinion they have won and we have lost.⁸⁷

From the very outset it was clear that the former mechanisms of punitive discipline were no longer employable without further arousing the soldiery, but the revolution in authority was made irrevocable and total by the abolition of the death penalty (March 12) and the replacement of field courts and the disciplinary powers of officers with new courts elected jointly by soldiers and officers (mid-March).⁸⁸ Although officers at the front were in effect powerless, the soldiers there showed more regard than their metropolitan counterparts (for the time being) for the necessity of upholding military routine and a semblance of command structure. The spontaneous arrests affected only those regarded as incurably attached to "old regime," and replacement commanders were usually accepted willingly. However, the soldiers remained suspicious of their officers and were groping for new arrangements to ensure that the Army would serve the new order and not the old.

⁸⁷ *KA*, L-LI, 200.

⁸⁸ On the death penalty, see materials in *RPG*, I, 199-204; on the revocation of disciplinary powers of officers, see below, p. 271n.40.

CHAPTER VII



GENESIS OF THE SOLDIERS' COMMITTEES

PERHAPS NO OTHER FEATURE of the Revolution of 1917 is more imperfectly understood than the proliferation of soldiers' committees at the front. They are rightly regarded as analogous to the soviets in form and intent, and are vaguely (and correctly) linked to the disintegration of command authority in the Army; but beyond that, even specialists have difficulty envisaging their day-to-day operation or the forces they reflected. There is little awareness of the ubiquity of committees at every level of command, of the diversity of their functions, or of the regulations from Stavka that fully legitimized them by the end of March. To be sure, their very existence was an affront to traditional military principles and introduced the system of "dual authority" to the front, but it would be an error to blame them for the breakup of the Army. On the contrary, it was precisely the rapid formation of committees and their authorization by military orders that arrested the incipient disintegration discussed in the previous chapter. The impetus to committee formation came, on the one hand, from the spontaneous activity of the ranks, in response to the numerous conflicts with their officers (over the oath, the "concealment" of orders of the new government, the release of arrested officers, the dispatch of deputations to the rear for information), and on the other, from the command structure itself, which wanted desperately to regularize and contain within the narrowest possible limits the only readily available means of restoring working relations between officers and soldiers. The latter process was often launched first in sectors that had been spared the worst turbulence of early March in order to soften the expected shock. The combined impact of the two processes served to universalize the committee structure in a remarkably short time, so that by the first week of

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April soldiers' committees were functioning institutions validated by the higher command. A series of army and front congresses from late March to mid-April ratified the committee system and finalized its soviet orientation.¹

The front committees, however, were not exact counterparts of the metropolitan soviets. That the command structure participated in their formation and allotted certain official functions to them, such as supervising commissary accounts and mediating soldier-officer conflicts, and that officers as well as soldiers and NCOs served on them from the very outset, meant that in many instances they were initially susceptible to the influence or control of senior officers. Thus many of the deputations from freshly constituted committees to the capital took a strong prowar stance and a Kadet position on certain political issues. This situation could not endure for long, however, as pressure from below and increasing familiarity with events in the capital served to democratize the committees and to persuade the Kadet-oriented officers to withdraw, leaving Soviet-oriented elements in charge.²

¹ Very little serious literature on the committees exists in any language. In English one must still rely on W. H. Chamberlin's chapter on "The Mutiny of the Russian Army" in Vol. I of *The Russian Revolution 1917-21*, 2 vols. (New York, 1935). Chamberlin's judgments are generally sound, and he made good use of the sources available at that time. Marc Ferro, in "The Russian Soldier in 1917," *Slavic Review*, xxx (1971), 483-512, offers primarily a psychological portrait and says very little about the committees. Gerhard Wettig's monumental "Die Rolle der russischen Armee im revolutionären Machtkampf," *FO*, xii (1967), unfortunately views the committees from the standpoint of official pronouncements and discussions, which leaves a misleading impression of the process of committee formation, namely, that the impetus came from above rather than from below; moreover, some of the best documentation and Soviet scholarship has appeared since he published his study (see pp. 229-43). Soviet scholarship virtually ignored the committees until very recently, the only knowledgeable authority being V. I. Miller, who has written several excellent articles and a book that are used extensively for the present account (see nn. 11, 22, and 23 below).

² The "Kadet position" here, of course, means the Kadet party of Paul Miliukov, the only viable nonsocialist party. Because of its unequivocal prowar stance and its presumption to speak for the state, above class and party, it by default became the spokesman for many hitherto apolitical senior officers, as well as a vast assortment of unaffiliated elements of cultured society that felt threatened by the turbulent masses and the power of the Soviet. Thus, the traditionally liberal Kadet party began to develop a constituency among far more conservative elements in the social order, of which the senior officers were one. The complexion of the Kadet party

Another aspect of the situation that has received little attention and whose neglect has adversely affected interpretations of the Russian Revolution generally is that, once in being, the committee structure assumed a life of its own and soon ceased to reflect accurately the moods and attitudes of its constituency. Committee work, particularly above the regimental level, attracted primarily the "intellectuals in uniform," that is, student volunteers and junior-grade officers, clerks and specialists in the technical services or rear headquarters. Strikingly present on nearly all upper-level committees were Menshevik doctors and veterinarians of Jewish extraction; since educated Jews could not be commissioned, they were automatically funneled into service units in the rear as non-commissioned specialists. Secondarily, committees attracted those *praporshchiki* and NCOs with a modicum of education and workers (but relatively few peasants) with past political exposure. This accounts for the pronounced socialist and prosoviet coloration of most committees; at the same time, it explains their strong bias in favor of a continuation of the war and, consequently, in favor of reconstituting military discipline on new "democratic" foundations. Although they supported the formula of "no annexations or indemnities," they tended to interpret this in its most defensist variant, and indeed, they exercised a perceptible influence on the Soviet leadership to support military discipline, to condemn fraternization, and to endorse preparations for the summer offensive. Kerensky, even though he had already forfeited a good deal of his prestige among the public by the time he assumed the post of Defense Minister, still symbolized the Revolution to the less sophisticated committeemen at the front. The consequence of this complexion of the "committee class" was that in May and June it became increasingly estranged from its constituency and in effect became an adjunct to the authority of the government and the command structure in talking up and carrying through the June offensive. It was the residue of the committees' prestige and authority as revolutionary bodies that persuaded the majority of the soldiers to go over the top in spite of their misgivings. But by the same token, the collapse of the offensive rapidly accelerated the

is treated in very rich detail in William Rosenberg, *Liberals in the Russian Revolution: The Constitutional Democratic Party, 1917-1921* (Princeton, 1974). For the above point, see pp. 121-22.

process of estrangement and opened the road for the Bolshevization of the soldier masses.

The unevenness and unavailability of even the most elementary information on the committees suggested the advisability of the above overview, although this chapter will concentrate only on their origins (other aspects will be brought out in subsequent chapters). The committees are one of the most difficult subjects for the researcher to investigate because the otherwise abundant documents in Soviet collections studiously avoid the committees, and personal accounts by Soviet and émigré figures are notoriously lacking in objectivity. Soviet sources are most reticent on the period under discussion, that is, before the regular appearance of committee newspapers, and the facts are sparse and colored by subjectivity. One can ascertain with reasonable precision the actions of central institutions and of higher and lower commands, which issued regulations governing the structure, competency, and rights of committees, but there is very little precise information on the circumstances that led to the formation of particular committees in particular units.



Reminiscences on the genesis of committees are understandably vague on precise times and circumstances, but the few available diaries note that soldiers' committees were already functioning by mid-March.³ Embryo organizations certainly existed even earlier on a fairly broad scale and were sanctioned *ex post facto* when it became clear to military authorities that they had to be tolerated. Order No. One and subsequent clarifications had already been widely disseminated at the front, and personal accounts frequently link these to the blossoming of committees. The diarist of the Pavlovskii Guards Regiment, for example, noted on March 11 that the soldiers, out of suspicion of their officers, posted "their guards everywhere," particularly over ammunition supplies and machine guns, and offered organized resistance to the taking of the oath. He blames the tension on their isolation from the urban centers and suggests that mutual confidence could be restored by establishing "soldiers' control" over commissary expenditures and by exchanging representatives with other regiments in the division.

³ For example, see Mitrofanov, MS (diary entries for Mar. 19 and following days), and Selivachev, *KA*, IX, 120ff.

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The following day a midnight sergeants' conference in the woods resolved on the election of soldiers' deputies from the entire regiment and the removal of Count Rotermond, a staff officer apparently suspected of embezzling regimental funds. The same day "delegates" arrived from Lutsk (from a garrison soviet and staff and technical units of the Special Army headquarters), and the diarist expected this to calm things.⁴ In other guards regiments the situation was much the same.⁵

Information on regular infantry units is even more fragmentary, but in one of the confrontations over the oath (11th Division, Eighth Army, March 13) the soldiers demanded an automobile to send delegates to Chernovitsa and even to Petrograd to find out whether "all the newly granted freedoms have been declared to them."⁶ A crisis over the oath in the 87th Siberian Rifle Regiment, Ninth Army, on March 14 resulted in the arrest of its colonel, who was conveyed to the Kiev Soviet under the guard of elected soldiers.⁷ These instances suggest that the first committees grew out

⁴ *KA*, L-LI, 201-3. Since bargaining took place over the oath and the release of arrested officers, one can assume the existence of an ad hoc organization or committee.

⁵ See Sergeev, *Finlandets*, xxii, 31ff., and Klimovich, *Biulleten' Moscovskago Polka*, no. 130, pp. 1-2. Sergeev supposes that "some sort of soldiers' organization" existed during the crisis over the oath and the arrest of Col. Klodt, and that it developed into the regimental committee. Klimovich's diary entry for March 23 seems to reflect that a committee had been in existence since the arrival of "delegates" from the reserve battalion in Petrograd and that it was involved in the crisis over the oath and the arrest of officers. (The author has seen an order of Gen. Gol'tgoer, commander of the Second Guards Infantry Division, that confirms that on March 13 an assembly of elected representatives of the division met [already according to the formula of one soldier per company and one officer per battalion] and established committees at all levels. This fixes the date earlier than all other available sources and puts the matter beyond speculation. See f. 2232, op. 7, ed. kh. 2.)

⁶ *RDRA*, p. 34. This otherwise very rich collection (primarily staff communications) is particularly stingy for the month of March, giving no documents at all for the period March 11-24.

⁷ *VOSR. Sverzhenie*, p. 634. On March 11 elected deputies from all companies of the 31st Rifle Regiment solemnly proceeded to regimental headquarters to arrest the commander and 19 officers for "lack of sympathy to the new order." Gen. Smirnov, commander of the Second Army, ascribed the incident to a "mistaken interpretation of the role of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and its orders and proclamations." Shliapnikov, II, 177 (citing archival sources). The same report records the arrest on March 14 of Maj. Gen. Iatsenko, commander of the 3rd Division of the 11th Field

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of the numerous conflict situations of mid-March. Even if it were incorrect to assume that countless such instances went unrecorded, there can be no doubt that the concept of the need for a soldiers' representative body linked to the revolutionary authority in Petrograd was firmly implanted by mid-March; the virtually universal mistrust of officers, and in many cases their physical removal from their positions, logically called for a direct channel of information and authority bypassing and supplanting the command hierarchy. This is reflected even where it is obvious that soldiers were still groping for the means of doing so. Thus the soldiers of the 61st Siberian Rifle Regiment (Tenth Army, Western Front) addressed a letter to the Petrograd Soviet on March 19, complaining:

Honored deputies of the committee of workers and soldiers!

We are in no way able to cope with the old authority and regime. The gentlemen officers punish us just as they always have and don't allow us any of the freedom won by our brothers. . . . They line us up and the commander says: "I refuse to greet such scum [*svoloch*] and if anyone dares to address me I'll shoot him. . . ." In all respects they treat us in the old way and don't let us organize. . . . Mister deputies! Either arrest them yourselves or instruct us how to proceed.⁸

Artillery Brigade, for his negative attitude toward his new title of "Mister General." He was freed only after he consented to sending elected deputies to Petrograd. (A report of the 20th Regiment of the Grenadier Corps on the Western Front [f. 2327, op. iv, d. 1, l. 367] records that on March 7 two battalions left the front lines without permission, demanding of their commander an explanation for events and permission to send delegates to Petrograd. An impertinent soldier addressed him as "Mister Colonel," reflecting knowledge of Order No. One, since Guchkov's Order No. 114 had not yet reached the front. When the commander tried to arrest this soldier, he was himself arrested and forced to leave the regiment. This is the most direct evidence I have encountered that Order No. One prompted the idea of elected representatives of the soldiers, in this case confirming the connection with turbulent incidents of the first week.)

⁸ *VOSR. Sverzhenie*, p. 637. A transport unit from the same army complained that "the old regime is still with us" and cited as examples the continued use of "your Excellency" and the refusal to announce the acts of abdication, Order No. 114, and other orders of the new government. It requested an investigation and the sending of "deputies." *Ibid.*, p. 639. A similar letter to the Soviet from the Caucasus Army complained that the soldiers had to sign blank pieces of paper for the oath and that the officers neither conversed with them about events nor allowed them to hold meetings. *RDRA*, pp. 33-34.

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From such evidence one can conclude that a strong impulse to create soldiers' organizations and directly contact revolutionary authorities had already revealed itself, which persuaded the command structure that it was wiser to institute and regulate them from above than to face them as full-grown revolutionary organs.

By mid-March the proliferation of unauthorized soldiers' committees, arrests of officers, desertions, refusals to take the oath, and other forms of mass disobedience amounted to a total breakdown in the normal military order and seemed to presage the imminent collapse of the front and disintegration of the army. Yet it would be an exaggeration to regard it as of the same magnitude as events in the capital and naval centers. There was no general revolt against all officers, violence and lynchings, though often threatened, were rare, and arrests were usually undertaken in an orderly fashion, especially on the front lines, with due regard for the requirements of military routine. The frequent accusations of officers' betrayal to the enemy and "opening up the front," and the confidence with which prisoners were conveyed to rear headquarters suggest a concern for something other than anarchic revolt against the war or the command structure as such. Rather, the soldiers resisted their officers only insofar as they sensed or feared active hostility to the new revolutionary government in Petrograd. Unable to distinguish at this point between the Soviet and the agencies of the Provisional Government, or between Order No. One and Order No. 114, they simply wished to demonstrate their unequivocal support of the new regime and their determination that its orders should not be thwarted. Soldiers' organizations with their own channels to Petrograd authorities were in their minds the most expedient means of controlling the officers and guarding against their betrayal.

Attitudes toward the war were still ambiguous and undefined. To be sure, great hopes were pinned on the new government to bring about a speedy end to the war, but the Germans facing them across the trenches were still the enemy. Soldiers identified counterrevolutionary officers with the "German party" of the old regime and vaguely conceived of the "Germans" on both sides of the trenches as a threat to their dearly won freedom. In short, a defensist mood was as prominent at the front in the month of March as in the rear. Thus the potential for a return to calm was there, if the government could succeed in making its authority

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visible and direct and in gaining the soldiers' confidence that officers hostile to the new regime would be removed.



In the latter part of March the link with Petrograd was effected, and the committees were legitimized by both the command structure and the government in accordance with the soldiers' desires. Paradoxically, however, the Soviet involved itself only marginally in this process. In fact, the government and Stavka cooperated in authorizing committees precisely to head off their formation "from below" or under the auspices of the Soviet. These efforts eventually proved to have been in vain, because the committees soon linked up with the Soviet anyway, but it is noteworthy that in March the Provisional Government was more active and visible at the front than was the Soviet, despite Orders Nos. One and Two, and this requires clarification.

The rapid disappearance of all representatives of monarchial authority at every level in the first few days after the February Revolution had created a power vacuum that placed great demands on the new Petrograd authorities. Requests for official representatives, deputies, or commissars with authorized instructions and clarifications poured in from every corner of the empire. Particularly urgent requests came from centers where violence had flared up and rival contenders for power were locked in irreconcilable conflict. Both the Soviet and the Provisional Government had sent out trouble-shooters from the very first day—Kerensky to Moscow, Skobelev and Rodichev to Helsingfors, and other Duma representatives to Kronshtadt, Reval, and Riga—and the finalizing of the local structure of power was usually arranged through the brokerage of such emissaries. The higher military commanders, who were usually located in urban headquarters, were particularly anxious to settle local conflicts quickly in order to minimize the disastrous effects on military discipline and the likelihood of the virus spreading to the front. Thus requests by panicky commanders for authorized representatives of the new government or even for the Soviet to calm the tumultuous soldiery were quite frequent. Both the Provisional Government and the Soviet complied with such requests, sometimes conflicting, sometimes cooperating with each other to stabilize the situation along the lines of the Petrograd settlement. The Soviet, however, was

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fully occupied with the naval and urban centers of the rear and with the integration of turbulent garrisons and workers into the local structure of power, and for most of March it did very little to establish formal contacts with the front.⁹

The Provisional Government, on the other hand, owing in no small measure to the importunities of higher commanders, had its attention directed toward the front and immediate rear headquarters. Stavka, for its part, was receiving daily reports of the deteriorating situation from front commanders, together with requests for authoritative spokesmen from the new government. For example, General Dragomirov, commander of the Fifth Army (headquarters in Dvinsk), informed his superior, General Ruzskii, on the fifth that the local garrison was completely out of control and had put its commandant in chains. Repression by force, he felt, was out of the question in view of the proximity of the front, and he pleaded for "the immediate sending of members of the State Duma fully authorized to speak in its name . . . who could calm the population and local troops." He named Kerensky in particular as a figure who would enjoy authority.¹⁰ The Provisional Government was approached by an adjutant of General Ruzskii with a request for "the immediate arrival at headquarters of the front of several popular and responsible figures who can personally influence the soldiers in the sense of warding off harmful excesses."¹¹ On the sixth Guchkov informed General Alekseev that "tonight official deputies of the Duma are departing for all fronts," and on

⁹ Aside from the lack of references to Soviet emissaries in the front sources which so frequently allude to traveling Duma deputies, the Soviet's neglect of the front is reflected in the *protokoly* of the Executive Committee, which dispatched numerous trouble-shooters to Helsinki, Vitebsk, Riga, Kronshtadt, Luga, and Sevastopol, but not to the front. See *PSPZ*, pp. 18, 20, and *passim*. An exception seems to be A. E. Diubua, a prominent Menshevik who may have been sent as a commissar to the Twelfth Army (Northern Front) at this time, since he turned up in Riga in that capacity at the end of the month. The dispatch of emissaries was discussed in the Executive Committee on March 11, perhaps in response to local Social Democrats who advised of the success of the Duma emissaries, but was inexplicably postponed.

¹⁰ *VOSR. Sverzhenie*, p. 615. Ruzskii forwarded the request to Stavka the following day and employed the term "commissars." See *KA*, xxii, 57.

¹¹ Cited from an archival source in V. I. Miller, "Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia i vozniknovenie soldatskikh komitetov na fronte," in *Sverzhenie samoderzhaviia, Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 1970), p. 177.

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the following day all army commanders on the Northern Front were instructed to "grant the Duma deputies the opportunity to see and talk with the maximum number of soldiers and officers, who are to be elected by their units and entrusted with reporting what they hear to their comrades in arms."¹² The sources abound in references to the ecstatic reception of these Duma deputies at the front by soldiers, officers, and senior commanders alike.

The Duma representatives Ianushkevich and Filonenko (whose detailed record has been published) toured the Northern Front during the second week of March and were enthusiastically received at every railway station along the way to front headquarters; even in the middle of the night, great crowds were on hand. They were quickly able to determine sore spots and take appropriate steps. Portraits of the tsar and imperial insignia were removed from staff buildings and red banners tolerated. The Duma representatives met separately with elected representatives of the soldiers to answer questions and give authentic instructions from the government on this or that point. The oath, the fate of arrested officers, saluting, red arm bands and ribbons, and the cancellation of leaves were the points most frequently discussed. In addition, the representatives were plied with general political questions on land distribution, the constituent assembly, the dynasty, and the war. The soldiers were satisfied on most points, not so much by what was said as by who was saying it. The credit of the Duma was still very high, whereas the role of the Soviet was still only hazily understood (though Order No. One was widely known).

Following their visits to the rear garrisons, the deputies separated, each touring a sector of the front to try to anticipate and settle disputes. In general the deputies carried away the impression that the front soldiers were in good spirits and far more willing to submit to discipline of the right sort than their counterparts in the rear. Some units were found to be in exemplary order under popular officers, and others expressed a willingness to submit if manifestly counterrevolutionary officers were removed. Not infrequently officers themselves suggested the removal of certain of their peers for the sake of harmonious relations with their men. The chief meliorating influence of the Duma representatives was that they could act as intermediaries between the agitated, suspicious rank and file and the confused, inexperienced subalterns.

¹² *KA*, xxii, 59, 66.

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By virtue of their authority as genuine representatives of the government, they were able to persuade the men that in the interests of freedom they must maintain discipline, pursue the war, and expect the resolution of political questions by the constituent assembly. The officers were enjoined to accept the innovations gracefully, especially those stipulated in Order No. 114, and to do all in their power to earn the confidence and respect of their men. There were many scenes of sentimental reconciliation and professions of common devotion to the new order. Such at least, is the picture conveyed by the Duma deputies' report.¹³

Although this is the only complete published report dating to this time, the versions in other sources are essentially the same. Stepun's account of the visit of Duma deputies I. P. Demidov and P. P. Gronsii to the Seventh Army (Southwestern Front), though lacking a precise date and other details, vividly fixes the psychological moment:

The news that the Duma deputies were to come to us at the front was greeted by the officers with great enthusiasm. For over a week we had lived in the dark. Order No. One of the Petrograd Soviet . . . had created unbelievable confusion even though it applied only to the Petrograd garrison: it aroused in the soldiers completely unrealizable hopes and fully justified indignation among the officers. Whether the Provisional Government stood behind this order, signed by unknown persons, was not yet known.¹⁴

The staff headquarters, artillery positions, and the route along which the deputies were expected to travel were decked out in red flags, an orators' tribune stood ready, and the soldiers were in a thoroughly festive mood. The officers, however, were quite tense, not knowing whether the visit would bring the longed-for calm or excite the passions of the soldiers still more. The exchange of a few phrases before the ceremonies began was reassuring: "Our

¹³ See *Raza*, pp. 43-50. Their report is dated March 13.

¹⁴ Stepun, *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia*, II, 13. Shliapnikov (II, 50-54) also cites extensively a second report on the Northern Front by Duma deputies Leliukov and Polynin of March 19-23, which was apparently undertaken in response to renewed appeals from front commanders to calm the unrest over the signing of the oath. One other report published in full, that of Maslennikov and Shmakov on the Southwestern Front, covers the period April 11-20, which is beyond the period presently under consideration. See *Raza*, pp. 50-57.

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people," whispered one of Stepun's officer companions. Demidov, a landowner and monarchist congenial to the senior officers, declared that all Russians must bow to the will of God and the last wish of the departed tsar and bear allegiance to the new government. Gronskii, a flaming Jacobin in Stepun's characterization, urged the soldiers to "fasten to your glorious bayonets the red banners of revolution, pour into the German trenches, and raise over them the standard of liberty, justice, and peace."¹⁵ In response he was greeted with loud hurrahs and tossed three times in the air. As was the case on the Northern Front, the reassurances by the deputies brought about a temporary reconciliation of the parties and a relative normalization of their relations. All the thorny issues were drowned in a flood of rhetoric and sentimentality.

The Duma tours were thus a critical influence in stabilizing the situation and facilitating, if not directly initiating, the transformation of the committees from organs of chaotic, elemental revolt against officer authority into tolerated, established institutions at the front. While the deputies delicately skirted the issues of Order No. One and dual power in the capital, the elective or representative principle had already been conceded in the very fact of the meetings they conducted.¹⁶ The example of the Twelfth Army, while unique in scope, well illustrates the inherent appeal of the representative idea. In response to a spontaneously formed "executive committee" in Riga, General Radko-Dmitriev ordered that one officer and two enlisted men chosen by their peers assemble for a solemn reception of the Duma emissaries Makagon and Efremov on March 9. However, the assembled representatives constituted themselves as a soviet for the Twelfth Army, formed a temporary executive committee, and immediately set about organizing committees in their respective units.¹⁷ It seems likely that Duma deputies here and on other occasions advised lower commanders to

¹⁵ Stepun, *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia*, II, 16.

¹⁶ Shortly after the deputies' visit, Stepun reports, an elected deputation of three officers and three soldiers departed for Petrograd, though he cannot recall "on whose orders or initiative." This suggests that by this time the representative principle was commonly accepted. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁷ See Chemodanov, pp. 74-77; Makhrov, MS, p. 145, and SS, Mar. 12. The most informative is Chemodanov, an officer-deputy from a Siberian rifle regiment. There was a similar gathering of deputies of the Fifth Army in Dvinsk around the same time to receive the Duma deputies Maslennikov and Dziubinskii. See Col. P. A. Petrushevskii, MS diary (entry for Mar. 16), RA; Petrushevskii was himself an officer-deputy.

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accept such committees as a means of restoring calm. Since the government itself had such a working relationship with the Soviet, and since the only alternative seemed to be endless conflict and unrest, General Radko-Dmitriev, like other commanders, doubtless found it expedient to follow this course. And while the extent to which the Duma deputies facilitated the process is unclear, it appears that the Soviet contributed nothing beyond its original proclamation of Order No. One and subsequent clarifications. No traveling representatives of the Soviet to the front were authorized until well into April, even though the idea of military commissars had been discussed in the Executive Committee from the very beginning and received formal approval on April 5.¹⁸



While the senior- and lower-level commanders were working out various accommodations to the new circumstances, General Alekseev at Stavka continued to pursue an inflexible policy of "no changes in the existing military statutes during wartime" and insisted that all orders pertaining to the front be channeled through Stavka. His position proved completely unworkable in practice because his commanders were forced to make various compromises in order to avoid becoming completely engulfed in the raging elements. Soldiers' soviets, with or without the permission of field commanders, had become part of local revolutionary establishments by the second week in March in virtually every town or city near the front (Pskov, Riga, Dvinsk, Vitebsk, Minsk, Lutsk, Tiflis, Erivan, and even Mogilev, where Stavka was located), and scarcely a single local garrison commander remained at his post after the first wave of turbulence. Commanders were obliged to lend themselves as decoration pieces to local celebrations of the Revolution or face the prospect of direct challenges to their authority. It was very difficult for field commanders to isolate their units from the libertarian practices of the rear; participants in these remarkable proceedings brought vivid accounts to the front lines almost at once and inevitably suggested imitation or the sending of deputies

¹⁸ The question of sending Soviet commissars to the front was discussed again in the Executive Committee on March 16, and a provisional instruction was approved on the nineteenth, but it was still a matter of discussion with the War Ministry, from whom it sought accreditation that would impress commanders. The matter was not resolved until well into April. See *PSPZ*, pp. 55, 61-62, and *passim*.

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to the rear. Thus many commanders, in the absence of clear directives and under considerable pressures, tolerated and sometimes encouraged the formation of committees, hoping that this would lead to a quick easing of tensions.¹⁹

Until Stavka gave its formal approval, however, the committees were under a cloud of illegitimacy. For almost a week Alekseev refused to budge from the position he enunciated to the Provisional Government on March 5, that any "agitators" disrupting normal military discipline would suffer the full severity of military law. Nevertheless, certain considerations were probably already persuading Alekseev that adaptation to the revolutionary current, rather than confrontation might be a more expedient policy. The decision to send Duma deputies to the Northern Front was made without consulting him, and he had acquiesced.²⁰ By the eighth he was informed ex post facto that the naval commanders of the Baltic and Black Sea fleets had recognized mixed committees of officers and enlisted men through the mediation of Duma representatives and that thereafter tensions had considerably relaxed.²¹ Furthermore, he had been obliged to authorize the formation of a "Soldiers' and Officers' Assembly" in Mogilev on the same date in order to prevent the formation of a soviet dominated by garrison units.²² He could hardly persist in chiding the Provisional Gov-

¹⁹ Documents for the Western Front for March 17-19 (published in Shliapnikov, III, 121ff.) reveal that committees authorized by commanders were already functioning in the 165th, 169th, and 627th Infantry regiments, whereas the front order, which was issued on the eighteenth, was not transmitted to the regimental level until several days later. Shliapnikov's materials record numerous disorders, but none in the above-named units.

²⁰ *VOSR. Sverzhenie*, p. 607.

²¹ He had received a very optimistic report on March 6 on the situation in the Helsingfors and Reval ports from Fleet Commander Adm. Al'tvater, who credited the committees with calming the troubled waters. *KA*, xxii, 56-57. Adm. Kolchak had refused a similar request on the same day by the sailors of the Black Sea Fleet, but the next day Gen. Verkhovskii, commander of the Black Sea Division (which was being prepared for a descent on the Bosphorus), had mobilized the support of officers of the port behind his scheme for joint officer-seamen committees and had obtained the approval of the visiting Duma deputy Tulakov. Verkhovskii's bold step narrowly averted a repetition of the slaughter of naval officers that had occurred in the Baltic Fleet, and Kolchak accepted it as a fait accompli. See *ibid.*, Verkhovskii, *Na Golgofo*, p. 71, and the Soviet version of his memoirs, *Na trudnom perevale*, chap. 7.

²² V. I. Miller, *Soldatskie komitety russkoi armii v 1917g.* (Moscow, 1974), p. 71.

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ernment or lower commanders for making concessions to the revolutionary mob when he had done the same.

A recent Soviet investigation has cast considerable light on Alekseev's change of course by making extensive use of hitherto unpublished materials.²³ On the seventh Alekseev submitted to the War Minister a formal program consisting of six points: (1) a ban on further delegations to the front; (2) a ban on further arrests of officers by soldiers or civilians; (3) a ban on changes in existing military statutes without consulting Stavka; (4) an injunction against soldiers joining political organizations or attending political meetings, "at least at the front" (note the direct conflict with Order No. 114); (5) a reaffirmation of the authority of officers over their subordinates; and (6) an endorsement of strict enforcement of all punitive measures for breaches of discipline and incitement to disobedience. Guchkov, apparently distressed over Alekseev's obtuseness, penned a forceful reply, designed to enlighten the acting supreme commander in political realities:

We must establish a uniform understanding of the present situation, evaluating it only with concern for bitter reality, discarding all illusions. Only then will we perhaps be able to take appropriate measures to save the army and the state. . . . I urge you therefore to believe that the following is the real state of affairs: the Provisional Government does not possess any real power, and its directives are carried out only to the extent that it is permitted by the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, which enjoys all the essential elements of real power, since the troops, the railroads, the post and telegraph are all in its hands. One can say flatly that the Provisional Government exists only so long as it is permitted by the Soviet. In particular, the War Ministry is able to issue only those directives that are not in essential conflict with positions taken by the Soviet.²⁴

Guchkov sent the memorandum through two General Staff aides, Colonels D. V. Satterup and G. N. Tumanov, who were presumably briefed carefully, and perhaps even entrusted with confidential instructions to encourage Stavka to recognize soldiers' organizations.

²³ V. I. Miller, "Stavka i soldatskie komitety v marte 1917 g.," in *OGV*, pp. 70-71.

²⁴ *VOSR. Sverzhenie*, pp. 429-30.

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In any event, between the ninth and the eleventh Alekseev completely reversed his policies with respect to soldiers' organizations and the question of politics in the army. With Alekseev's approval a senior staff officer lectured an officers' gathering on the theme of the constituent assembly. That this was followed by a discussion on the possibility of a course of instruction in political matters for officers of the staff reflects a determination that officers should be educated in political questions so that they could exert some influence over their men. On the tenth General Kvetsinskii inquired whether it was permissible to admit soldiers' representatives to officers' meetings (apparently officers' meetings had already been authorized), to which Alekseev agreed, conceding that such an arrangement already existed at Stavka.

On March 11 Alekseev announced his new policy in Telegram No. 2137, which was sent to all front commanders. The text shows that he directly incorporated the advice he had been receiving from various quarters.²⁵ Repeating nearly verbatim Guchkov's characterization of existing relations between the Soviet and the government, he added that the Soviet was composed in part of "moderate elements who understand the situation and recognize the need for the continuation of the war, discipline, order, and subordination to commanders," but "who are struggling with more extreme elements for influence over the masses." The addendum had been suggested by N. A. Bazili, an official of the Foreign Ministry who was attached to Stavka. While on a mission to the capital he had been put in touch with unnamed Soviet figures (Chkheidze, Gvozdev?) by Guchkov, and had been impressed by their positive attitude toward military discipline and the prosecution of the war. The suggestion of front tours by authorized Soviet representatives emerged from this contact and was conveyed to Stavka in the same message (possibly also through Tumanov and Satterup).²⁶ Alekseev's instructions in Telegram No. 2137 can be summarized in three proposals: (1) the formation at every front and army headquarters of special committees of Zemgor figures and "other or-

²⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 627-28.

²⁶ Bazili wired Stavka on March 7 as follows: "The situation is apparently improving. Through the War Minister I conferred with representatives of the Soviet. Those with whom I conversed expressed a definite intention to carry the war to a decisive finish. They promised to send representatives to the front, which, according to the prevailing opinion here, would have tremendous significance." Quoted by V. I. Miller, in *OGV*, p. 67.

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ganizations," to which would be attached chosen members of the Duma and the moderate wing of the Soviet who would tour trouble spots and converse with soldiers; (2) the systematic preparation of the officer corps for informal conversations with the men, during which they would answer political questions in order to convince them that "everything possible is being done for their welfare"; and (3) the introduction of officers into soldiers' committees that had been formed independently of the command in order to realize "the aims expressed in point two, [and] *in order to take events in hand and control them rather than endlessly to collide with accomplished facts*" (italics added). Commanders were urged to reply immediately with comments and additional suggestions, "without regard to preconceived notions [in view of] the exceptional nature of unfolding events."

Alekseev's strategy was to meet the threat of "organization from below" with "organization from above," securing for this purpose the cooperation of those political and revolutionary groups that supported the war. The "special committees" were conceived not as representative organs of the Army—indeed, their composition was to be primarily civilian—but as carefully chosen propaganda teams to put the soldiers' minds at ease over burning political issues and to reindulcate the idea of military discipline. Officers, in contrast to the time-honored tradition of being outside politics and organized only as a hierarchy of authority, were now to function collectively as political mentors and benevolent confidants of their men. It is clear that Alekseev's intent was not to encourage the spread of soldiers' organizations but to contain them, and where their rise could not be prevented, to integrate them into the proposed propaganda apparatus; in other words, the whole enterprise was designed to restore and uphold the monolithic structure of command authority.

Regardless of Alekseev's intentions, there was little prospect of keeping the new institutions within the announced guidelines, and the inevitable result was to extend dual authority to the front and through the whole range of the military hierarchy. Front and army commanders were in many cases anxious to formalize a committee structure in order to put an end to the interminable conflicts, and so seized on the concessions of point three and virtually ignored points one and two. General Iudenich's reply for the Caucasus Front, the only one for which a full text is available, is typical:

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The circumstances outlined in your Telegram No. 2137 correspond in general to what is transpiring in the cities in the rear of the Caucasus Army. Executive committees are springing up independently in pursuance of directives from Petrograd. The composition of the committees on which military personnel are represented in a limited number is in general favorable in the sense of striving to restore order and continue the war effort to victory. The committees are regarded as immensely authoritative for the garrison. In Tiflis there was a general meeting of soldiers and officers at which a general was elected as chairman, which to a certain extent characterized the mood of the majority. . . . With respect to forming a front committee, that will be decided upon with the arrival in Tiflis of special delegates sent by the government to the Caucasus.²⁷

Iudenich, like commanders at other fronts, treated Alekseev's directive as a sanction for concessions already granted to the garrisons or under consideration for the front. Ruzskii's reply noted that Duma members had already brought considerable calm to his front and that officers were already participating in functioning committees, but that the introduction of Zemgor figures would be undesirable, since they enjoyed no authority. Brusilov announced his agreement with all three points and stated that orders for their execution "according to circumstances" were being prepared. Brusilov was the most prompt in carrying out Alekseev's directive, as well as the most energetic in trying to hold to the original design. On the twelfth he ordered the formation of soldier-officer committees in each army corps in pursuance of point three, and on the fourteenth he supplemented that with an instruction to follow the principle of drawing in one officer and two soldiers per regiment and delegating one officer and one soldier to each army headquarters to serve on an army committee. At the same time, he contacted Guchkov directly to request that Duma and Soviet delegates be attached to the Zemgor committees that he was instituting in each of the four armies under his command.²⁸ The commanders

²⁷ *Revoliutsiia 1917 g. v istoricheskikh dokumentakh* (Tiflis, 1930), pp. 69-70. According to the editor, Gen. Iudenich had suggested Skobelev as the Duma deputy most likely to enjoy confidence, but then struck it from the text.

²⁸ *VOSR. Sverzhenie*, pp. 628-69. All other information in this paragraph

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of the Western and Caucasus fronts sent out general orders on the formation of committees on the seventeenth while General Sakharov of the Rumanian Front waited until the twenty-fourth to do so. Of all the front commanders, only Sakharov seems to have been dilatory and unsympathetic to the idea of instituting committees, limiting himself to minimal gestures consistent with the order.



Invariably, as permission to form soldier-officer committees was passed down the chain of command, and as the problems of realizing them in a form that would satisfy the soldiers became clear, Alekseev's original model faded farther into the background. In its place there emerged the outlines of a consistent representational structure in which soldiers rather than officers would predominate. Since in many instances existing soldiers' committees had to be absorbed, the elective principle on a fully democratic basis and the numerical preponderance of soldiers over officers had to be conceded. Brusilov's attempt to maintain the parity principle at the top was hopelessly unrealistic and was promptly abandoned in practice. Furthermore, official directives were extremely vague with regard to the powers of the fledgling organizations, and each subsequent clarification led to new concessions. The purely informational function conceived by Alekseev soon had to be modified to include choosing deputations to Petrograd, supervising finances, leaves, and commissary affairs, petitioning commanding officers on any and all needs, mediating conflicts between officers and soldiers, and educating the soldiers through newspapers and political meetings in preparation for the constituent assembly. The lack of clear directives from the top led to the resolution of such matters at the corps level and below. As practical decisions were fed back up the chain of command, there was a belated tendency to try to restrict the liberties taken at the lower levels and to impose uniform statutes and regulations.²⁹ In the latter part of March

is from V. I. Miller's article in *OGV*. (Archival documentation of the above was seen by the author subsequently in the archive of the Third Infantry Division, f. 2333, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 34, 39, 89.)

²⁹ Undoubtedly, a considerable volume of staff communications was exchanged in connection with the problems of establishing the committees, but virtually none of it has been published. An order of Gen. Brusilov of March 15, which denies the committees' assumed rights to elect officers

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Stavka itself worked out a set of "temporary" and more restrictive regulations, which were issued as Alekseev's Order No. 51 of March 30. And finally, for good measure, the Polivanov Commission (created by Order No. 115 of Guchkov) issued more comprehensive (and liberal) regulations based on a draft worked out by the Soviet; it went out to the Army on April 16 as Order No. 213 and superseded Order No. 51 and all others then in practice.³⁰

Because the different levels of command were resolving the practical issues on their own, there was considerable diversity of practice from one sector to another and between different levels of the same sector; the example of more liberal provisions for a neighboring unit or new directives from above could easily upset a tenuous arrangement and lead to renewed clashes between officers and soldiers. Unfortunately, one can see only the bare outlines of this process through the existing documentation, but the sort of transformation that took place can be seen in General Zaionchkovskii's XVIII Army Corps, which was part of the Eighth Army commanded by General Kaledin in Galicia. Of all the army com-

and to communicate directly with Petrograd authorities, may be regarded as a typical clarifying directive. See *RDRA*, pp. 38-39.

³⁰ The complex history of the genesis of these two orders is recounted in detail in V. I. Miller, *Soldatskie komitety*, pp. 103-32, and will be repeated here only when relevant to the complications arising out of them at the front. Suffice it to say that Order No. 51 was based on the statute for the Black Sea Fleet that had been worked out by Gen. Verkhovskii, who brought the project to Petrograd and urged its adoption on the Soviet and Guchkov. The latter recommended that it be taken to Stavka, where it was watered down on Denikin's insistence (he was then chief of staff to Alekseev) and issued as a "temporary statute." Order No. 213 was based on a project emanating from a commission of the Soldiers' Section of the Soviet under the chairmanship of V. L. Utgof (an S.R. *praporshchik* of defensist persuasion) and forwarded to the Polivanov Commission, where discussions proceeded very slowly. (On the Polivanov Commission, see above, p. 234.) The projects were discussed in the Soldiers' Section and published in *IzPS* on March 22 and 28, respectively, too late to affect most of the statutes already evolved at the front. Miller points out that the alterations in Verkhovskii's project were substantial, reducing the soldier-officer ratio from 5:1 to 2:1 and precisely confining the committees' role to upholding the fighting capacity of the Army and military discipline, without, however, interfering with the command's exclusive role in operational orders and training duties. See Denikin, *Russian Turmoil*, pp. 160-61. The projects affected the actual structure of soldiers' committees very little and served only as new occasions for bitter conflicts between the command and the committees. For the texts of the orders, see Shliapnikov, III, 312-25.

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manders, General Kaledin enjoyed the reputation of being the most unalterably opposed to the Revolution and all its works, and in practice he tried to limit the execution of Brusilov's order to sanitized committees based on the parity principle. In the third week of March Zaionchkovskii assembled regimental representatives at corps headquarters for what he conceived of as a ceremonial occasion with speeches by commanders and loyal replies from the ranks. Instead, according to the account by his chief of staff, General E. A. Vertsinskii, a flood of accusatory speeches erupted, and "the assembly spontaneously and against all expectations turned into a political meeting." In fact, the affair lasted three days, and, after considerable wrangling, far-reaching concessions were made to meet the soldiers' demands. Vertsinskii notes that "most officers present were made aware for the first time of the profound class cleavage that existed between officers and soldiers, and between the lower classes and the more privileged ones." His final observation is perhaps the most instructive: "Although the conference undoubtedly hastened the revolutionizing of the corps, at the same time, by introducing certain inevitable changes in the life of the corps, it helped to prevent the wild excesses that took place elsewhere."³¹ Actually, the actions of the XVIII Corps were typical of those of the Army as a whole, and every commander who under the pressure of the moment felt obliged to make concessions had the feeling that he was "preventing excesses" and justified them thus to his superiors.

In the neighboring Eleventh Army General Selivachev, a division commander who scrupulously recorded his experiences in his diary, received word from corps headquarters on March 17 on the authorization of soldier-officer committees.³² There had been minor incidents in his division, including several removals of officers, and some units had illicit committees, but to his extreme irritation his corps commander dealt with them over his head and informed him of the new Army regulations on committees only after they had been promulgated, leaving many officers helpless before their committees. Apparently the stipulation of a ratio of five soldiers to two officers and the assignment of commissary supervision and mediation of soldier-officer disputes were also handed down from above, but they met with Selivachev's approval as possible solu-

³¹ E. A. Vertsinskii, *God revoliutsii* (Tallinn, 1929), p. 14.

³² For the following, see Selivachev, *KA*, ix, 120ff.

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tions to the two chief causes of soldier-officer friction. He was thoroughly incensed, however, when the corps commander recommended handing over disciplinary powers to the committees and approved the removal of unpopular officers at their request. Nevertheless, in spite of his aversion to such "demagoguery," Selivachev dealt very correctly with his divisional committee and allowed a three-day conference of lower committee representatives on March 27-29, which was addressed by himself and visiting Duma deputies. The proceedings were kept safely within a framework of patriotic speeches and discussions of petty details of supply. The divisional committee, which was very loyal to Selivachev personally, insisted on the right to pass resolutions binding on lower committees. The only "political" resolution appealed to the workers to stay at their benches and keep the shell moving. Selivachev was one of the exceptional commanders who managed to keep things on an even keel. Unfortunately for him, the arrival two days later of thoroughly undisciplined marching companies threatened to undo these satisfactory arrangements (at which time the diary entries break off).

It would be possible to demonstrate that Selivachev's experience was exceptional, that many more commanders entirely lost control of their units to committees, and that the great majority of units remained in an uneasy state between military and committee authority. But before considering the variations, it is important to understand how the committees were established through the command structure, which was fairly uniform on all fronts, and to become aware of the characteristic strains encountered by the lower levels of command. Direct documentation on these aspects is very rare in the published sources, but a fairly complete picture can be constructed from archival materials on two regiments of the XXXI Corps.³³



The XXXI Corps of the Third Army on the Western Front was located at the bend of the Stokhod River that was to be the scene

³³ The following materials from TsGVIA on the XXXI Corps are used here: orders of the day, Mar.-Apr. 1917, of the 329th Buzuliiskii Infantry Regiment (f. 2838); orders of the day and *protokoly* of the regimental committee, for the same period, of the 517th Batumskii Infantry Regiment (f. 3054); and archive of the corps committee of the XXXI Corps (f. 2240).

of a disastrous battle at the end of March.³⁴ A general order for the Western Front, Order No. 6624 of March 17, authorized the organization of committees. What discussion or exchanges with Stavka preceded it is not known, but in the interval between Alekseev's order and this date it was decided to institute soldier-officer committees at every level from company up to army on the basis of free elections.³⁵ XXXI Corps headquarters immediately passed the order down to lower commands, authorizing committees at all levels but without specifying either the soldier-officer ratio or a procedure; a second order further confused the situation by ordering the simultaneous election of one officer and one soldier per division for an army deputation to Petrograd.

Both the 517th Batumskii and the 329th Buzuliiskii regiments formed committees in response to Order No. 6624, the Batumskii Regiment registering the fact in its orders of the day of March 21.³⁶ Because the second order called for the electors for the deputation to Petrograd to report to division headquarters on the twenty-third, it was necessary to rush the formation of the committees, which were responsible for accrediting them. Colonel Ostrovskii, commander of the Batumskii Regiment, succeeded in devising

³⁴ The battle figured prominently in the polemics in the capital for and against the Soviet; see below, pp. 310, 318. For an account of the operations, see A. M. Zaionchkovskii, *Strategicheskii ocherk voyny*, Vol. VII, *Kampaniia 1917 g.* (Moscow, 1923), chap. 2.

³⁵ See V. I. Miller, *Soldatskie komitety*, pp. 77, 79, and *RazA*, p. 58. Miller dates the order as March 16, whereas the staff documents in *RazA* date it March 17. (An order of March 14 from Gen. Parskii, commander of the Grenadier Corps, to his division commanders [f. 2327, op. iv, d. 1, l. 373] explains that the *Minister President* [Lvov'] *has authorized the election of soldiers' deputies on the Northern Front* and that by Order No. 5889, *this same right has been granted to the Western Front!* This unique piece of evidence reveals the direct involvement of the Provisional Government in authorizing committees, probably as an immediate consequence of the Twelfth Army Assembly in Riga on March 9, but the relationship to Alekseev's "change of course" of March 11 is not clear. I leave it to the reader to judge the extent to which this modifies my basic version of the introduction of committees, but I regard the role of the Duma deputies as catalysts or intermediaries as being thereby confirmed. Obviously, important documentation on official involvement in the origin of committees is still missing, but my premise that their establishment came in response to spontaneous efforts of the soldiers themselves, with or without the benefit of Order No. One, is in no way modified.)

³⁶ For this and following details, see f. 3054 under the appropriate date.

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clear instructions for the electoral procedure by the twenty-first. Company committees were to be composed of soldiers only, one deputy per platoon (apparently officers were regarded as out of place at this level), and were to "report each day to the company commander on the desires of the company"; battalion committees were to have two elected officers and the full complement of the company committees (ratio of one officer to eight men); and regimental committees were to consist of one officer per battalion, two from the technical service units, and one from the staff, plus one soldier per company or technical unit (ratio of about one to three). The functions of the committees were defined as "all questions of the internal life of the unit and control over the actions of the commissary personnel." Ostrovskii ordered the first session of the regimental committee for the following day at 8:00 A.M., at which time it would select the electors (one officer, one soldier) to the divisional assembly that would choose a deputy for the Third Army's delegation to Petrograd.

One cannot but be impressed with the promptness and circumspection of the commander in carrying out his orders, but the disparity in the ratio between officers and men for the two sets of elections could not but draw the attention of the soldier-delegates. There is good reason to believe that not all went smoothly in this regiment, or in the many others on the Western Front that were affected by Order No. 6624. Confusion certainly resulted in the Batumskii Regiment when extensive new instructions on the order of elections were received from corps headquarters on the same day (Order No. 71 of March 21). While they left the composition of the lower committees (here called "soviets") to the discretion of lower commanders, they fixed the representation of a corps soviet at fourteen (four officers to ten soldiers), six of whom would represent staff units and eight the line divisions, making it obvious that the higher the level of the committee, the greater the weight of the officers and staff headquarters.

The daily orders of the Batumskii Regiment are silent on committees until the twenty-eighth, when new elections were called in conformity with Corps Order No. 71, leading one to suppose that in the meantime the original elections had been countermanded or delayed by some misunderstanding. Confusion of this kind must have resulted again when Stavka issued Order No. 51 on March 30, which stipulated a ratio for regimental and higher-

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level committees of one officer to two soldiers (simultaneously eliminating committees at the battalion and corps levels), and again when a new statute from the War Ministry (Stavka Order No. 213, April 16) set the ratio at one to four.³⁷ Other sources indicate that arbitrary changes in the representation formula and repeated elections were a frequent source of conflicts and bitter feelings. The Batumskii regimental committee did not assume its final form and begin its sessions until April 5, at which time the commander issued a strict order that "military questions and orders of superiors on fortifying positions, work and battle assignments, weapons and equipment, staff personnel changes, and the appointment and removal to command positions are not subject to discussion." This stricture and the inordinate delay suggest considerable confusion and difficulty in setting up the committees and imply that the conflicting orders from different levels of command had more than a little to do with it.

Although the Batumskii orders of the day are sparing in details on the regiment's internal life, they reflect many of the issues causing turmoil in the Army coincidental with the establishing of the committees. Thus an order proceeding down the chain of command explained that the "Declaration of the Rights of Soldiers" published in the *Izvestiia Petrogradskago Sovieta* of March 15 was unofficial and did not relate to the front army (Army order, March 19; Batumskii order of the day, March 23). A draft of the declaration had been discussed in the Soldiers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet and was approved, but was referred to the Polivanov Commission for further discussion.³⁸ Nevertheless, it was reported on in the capital press and gave the front soldiers one more reason to believe that the officers had suppressed an important order of the Soviet granting additional liberties. The orders of March 27 carry General Lesh's impassioned appeal to stop the arbitrary arrests of officers. While stressing the illegality of such arrests and the harm they were doing to the fighting effectiveness of the army, the general incautiously stated that he only considered complaints brought to his attention by organized units and not by individuals, which left the impression of legitimizing complaints against offi-

³⁷ See Shliapnikov, III, 313 (par. 19), 320 (par. 1).

³⁸ It was eventually promulgated by Kerensky, in a somewhat altered form, as one of his first acts as War Minister. See *VVP*, May 14, 1917, and *RPG*, II, 878-83.

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cers by committees. The occasions for such misunderstandings of the pronouncements of higher commanders were legion and were stubbornly held to by lower committees.³⁹ The orders for March 27 also record the abolition of the disciplinary powers of officers, which were to be taken over by elective disciplinary courts.⁴⁰ This far-reaching reform, coupled with the general abolition of the death penalty by the Provisional Government (law of March 12), eliminated at one stroke the awesome punitive powers that had driven the soldier masses into the teeth of machine-gun fire and kept them submissive in the face of hunger, abuse, and neglect. Nothing occasioned more unbridled joy among the troops in these weeks than the disappearance of the life-and-death powers of their officers. The officers, however, rightly sensed that the disciplinary courts were not an adequate substitute for the direct exercise of swift, unambiguous judgment by a commander. The Batumskii order simply passed on the announcement by Western Front headquarters of the War Minister's order, which called for comments by unit commanders but gave no instructions on the implementation of the reform. Nevertheless, Colonel Ostrovskii, anticipating the complications that would inevitably arise should the soldiers find out about the reform through other than official channels, ordered immediate elections for company disciplinary courts.

Whether any of the above issues caused unrest in the Batumskii Regiment, the documents do not record, but there is evidence that Colonel Ostrovskii was encountering increasing resistance to his authority. A divisional order of March 24 stressed the importance of regular training exercises and work details, and Ostrovskii followed it up with an even more pleading commentary:

³⁹ A similar case was Brusilov's order of March 15. In the course of explaining that the elections of officers in Petrograd were the result of "the extraordinary circumstances of the change in power," he conceded that "it is possible to be dissatisfied with one's superior, but the way to express this and to bring it to the attention of higher commanders is stipulated by law." Since the pertinent laws were not cited, the logical inference could be made that knowledge of them had been deliberately withheld. See *RDRA*, p. 39.

⁴⁰ See orders of March 25 and 27, f. 3054. No date is given for the revocation of disciplinary powers, nor is there a record of it in *VVP*, but the regimental order quotes the decree in full, along with the invitation for comment by lower commanders. Again the command structure was caught between the hope of securing a reversal of the order and the fear that the ranks would hear of it through the newspapers. A law regulating the new disciplinary courts was passed on April 17. *RPG*, II, 894-95.

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The more energetically the soldiers apply themselves to repairing and improving the trench works, the less will be our casualties and wounded. Remember, gentlemen officers and soldiers, that the Russian people have won for themselves civil freedom, and you are obliged to defend the state that has given you that freedom. Remember, Russian soldiers, that you are no longer slaves, but masters of the Russian land, and in defending that land you are defending your own welfare and future happiness.

Forward, once again forward!

This is perhaps one of the more striking instances of the inflationary effect of the March revolutionary rhetoric. Officers had to employ every artifice of persuasion to accomplish even the most elementary tasks, and in many instances regular work routines broke down entirely.

The daily orders of the 329th Buzuliiskii Regiment have little to say about concurrent developments in the Army, but they reveal a more capable military commander with respect to technical preparedness and the practical needs of the troops.⁴¹ Colonel Troitskii took great pains not to upset his men unduly over political events and relayed only those orders from above that exhorted soldiers to observe discipline and the lawful orders of superiors. Order No. 114 was published with some delay, and there was also some unspecified difficulty in taking the oath, which caused a long postponement. For ten days after the issuance of Western Front Order No. 6624 no instruction on committees or elections is recorded, although a brief warning to the regimental committee on the twenty-fourth not to meet without his prior permission is evidence that the colonel complied. On the twenty-seventh the full text of the corps regulations on committees appeared, along with the divisional order of implementation, but the colonel provided no instructions of his own. Three days later a major incident in the regiment resulted in the removal of Colonel Troitskii by a vote of the regimental committee!

The Buzuliiskii regimental orders throw no light on this incident, but those of the Batumskii Regiment for April 24 append a summary of an investigation of the affair by the XXXI Corps headquarters. On March 21 the fourth company, which had been

⁴¹ For Buzuliiskii orders, see f. 2938, but as noted below, the crucial information comes from the Batumskii orders of April 24 (f. 3054).

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temporarily spelled from the front lines to perform guard duty on a railroad, complained that their commanding officer was concealing the latest orders of the government and requested that he be replaced by a man of their own choice. This action was reviewed by the regimental committee and branded as "impermissible and criminal." On the twenty-eighth the committee of the first battalion requested of the commander that Nicholas's monogram be removed from the regimental banner before proceeding with the much delayed oath-taking ceremony, and the colonel complied. Abruptly on the twenty-ninth the regimental committee met in secret session, with the officers' deputies excluded, and resolved that Colonel Troitskii should be removed as "an adherent of the old regime." Among the list of offenses were the usual ones of forcing the officers to be strict, of refusing to allow red ribbons, of employing the tsarist banner instead of the red banner of freedom, and of calling the Petrograd Soviet a "rabble." Significantly, he was also accused of having "ordered elections to the regimental soviet three different times." This is a striking confirmation of the dangerous situation created by the conflicting orders on committees at different levels of command, especially if the commander was already under suspicion. Colonel Troitskii, accustomed to carrying out orders regardless of any inconvenience or difficult circumstance, simply set new elections each time a new order came through the pipeline. More perspicacious commanders simply ignored the changes in the election formula or introduced them only after carefully preparing the ground.

Colonel Troitskii, alerted when guard posts disappeared around regimental headquarters, burst in on the meeting and after a prolonged altercation declared that it was evident that he could no longer command the regiment. In a separate meeting, the officers, who were piqued that they had been excluded from the meeting, telegraphed a request to the War Minister that they be transferred to some other duty "where officers are able to help the long-suffering fatherland." To mediate the dispute the division commander called upon the divisional committee, which condemned the regimental committee for violating its mandate and revoked its action. The next day (March 30) the two committees held a joint session, and the regimental committee submitted, requesting the officers to return and pledging "complete adherence to regulations and military law." The divisional committee agreed to deal with Colonel Troitskii's fate by "due process of law." What this

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was understood to mean is not clear, but it was probably based on the widely held assumption of an implicit "right of complaint" to the next highest command. In any event, Troitskii was not reinstated but was sent to corps headquarters, where much later (May 11) his removal was confirmed on the grounds of "unsuitability owing to the circumstances of the times," a code phrase that had come into currency to cover such cases.

This incident demonstrates how committees functioned in crisis situations and allows a comparison with similar incidents from the period before the establishment of committees. Although it shows how committees tended to overstep their defined functions and challenge the authority of commanders, it also reveals the restraining influence of higher committees and their concern to uphold the principles of military order and legality. In general, the lower the committee level, the greater the inclination to rebellion, and the higher the level, the greater the inclination to restraint. The Buzuliiskii regimental committee perfectly exemplifies the contradictory tendencies: citing a company committee for "criminal behavior" for trying to remove its commanding officer, one week later it was guilty of the same offense and was similarly overruled by the divisional committee. Thus, the committees manifested a dual potential—to become institutionalized revolutionary organs on the order of the soviets, or to become adjuncts of command authority to buttress military discipline. Through their intervention the committees were able to bring conflicting parties back to a functioning relationship much more expeditiously than divisional and corps commanders, who had had to rely on persuasion alone and ignore violations of legality. One is again reminded of Verbitsinskii's formulation, that the committees "hastened the revolutionary process" but at the same time "prevented wild excesses," that is, they maintained the only modicum of order possible in a revolutionary situation.

The comments of the corps commander on the investigative report are as instructive as the report itself and betray a relatively enlightened response. First, he ordered that to avoid future accusations of "concealing orders," a journal be kept of all valid orders of the Provisional Government, the War Minister, and the Commander in Chief and that it be placed in the custody of all committees, so that soldiers would know that they were not being deceived. He congratulated both the regimental and divisional committees for conscientious performance of duty in immediately

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investigating the respective incidents and calling subordinate committees to account (he ignored the rebelliousness of the regimental committee). But he censured the officers in both instances for laxity in allowing the committees to handle the crisis alone and exhorted them to "enter into the very thick of the soldier mass and live with them soul to soul." Troitskii and the regimental officer-deputies were censured for attempting to resign their positions and for not insisting on their right to command. The comments show that he accepted the legitimacy of the role of committees as mediators in conflicts between officers and men, but he reproached them mildly for basing their arguments to lower committees on their "mandate" from their constituencies rather than on military law and sound principles of military order. Interestingly, he acknowledged the soldiers' right to lodge complaints against superior officers (apparently even requests for removal), but not the right of removal, arrest, or negation of orders.

One could find numerous flaws in the commander's reasoning from a strictly legalistic point of view, but his intent—rightly, from his point of view—was to maintain a sense and semblance of legality while making the concessions to reality that were necessary for the resumption of relatively normal military life. He endorsed the comment of the divisional commander, that "the present occurrence must be patiently endured as an inevitable disruption in the Army in a period of transition, and one must hope for a resurrection on a new basis." With the countersignature of the front commander, General Gurko, the affair was "consigned to oblivion."



Although the documentation above covers only one specific example of the mechanisms and hazards of establishing committees on a regimental level, there is no reason to regard it as atypical for the front army as a whole (the timing would usually be earlier for the Northern Front and somewhat later for the other fronts). Most armies had committee structures in being, sanctioned by official orders, by the end of March or shortly thereafter. On the Northern Front, the First and Fifth armies held congresses and established army committees in the last week of March. The First Army Congress, which was attended by 204 delegates (two soldiers and one officer per regiment), set up several commissions, passed a few resolutions, and then proceeded en masse to Petro-

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grad. It seems to have been primarily concerned over the conflicts between the Soviet and the Provisional Government and the rumors that workers and soldiers in the capital were slacking in the war effort.⁴² The Fifth Army Congress worked out a detailed instruction (*nakaz*) on the organization of committees, which in its view took precedence over any and all regulations handed down by the command. Apparently General Dragomirov acquiesced: on April 2 he ordered all units not to modify their electoral procedures in conformity with Stavka's Order No. 51 because it would upset existing arrangements.⁴³ The Fifth Army Committee became one of the most solidly organized, politically articulate (pro-Soviet), and yet staunchly defensist committees in the entire army.

On the Western Front, in the Tenth and Third armies, lower-level committees were well established by the end of March. Little is known of the Second Army, which was rather small and hidden away in the Pinsk marshes, but there are some indications that as late as May the committees there were not functioning well and were poorly informed of events.⁴⁴ A front committee was established at the grandiose congress of the Western Front in Minsk (April 7-16), but for some reason army congresses and the formation of army committees did not take place until late April, under circumstances that remain undocumented.⁴⁵

On the Southwestern Front, where permission to form committees had been granted very early by Brusilov, the Seventh, Elev-

⁴² For a full record of the proceedings, see *IzPS*, Mar. 28. That the mood of the congress was definitely defensist, and that its Bolshevik chairman, P. Fedotov, is a wholly unreliable witness is discussed in detail in the next chapter. See Fedotov's account in *V boiakh za vlast' sovetov* (Moscow, 1937), pp. 14-18. See the opinion of V. I. Miller, *Soldatskie komitety*, pp. 291-92.

⁴³ See *Iz5A*, no. 2 (n.d. [ca. Apr. 18]), Apr. 21 and 26. The latter issue records Dragomirov's order that Order No. 51 *not* be interpreted as requiring new elections.

⁴⁴ See *RDRA*, pp. 132-33, and M. Petrov, *Bolsheviki na zapadnom fronte v 1917 godu. Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1959), p. 35 and passim. Petrov, a young Bolshevik doctor fresh from medical school, claims that there were no committees at all on his sector until May, which was certainly not typical even for the Second Army, but indicative of its isolation in the Pinsk marshes.

⁴⁵ On the Minsk Congress, see below, pp. 321-25. V. I. Miller mentions that no army committee was chosen at the congress of the Tenth Army at the end of March, but he has no information on the other two armies. *Soldatskie komitety*, p. 293. The sources, however, make numerous references to lower-level committees in all these armies.

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enth, and Special armies held congresses and formed army committees by early April, but in the Eighth Army General Kaledin successfully obstructed the formation of an army committee until the end of April. Though there were doubtless other units besides Zaionchkovskii's XVIII Corps that democratized their committee structure in spite of Kaledin's lack of encouragement, the parity principle prevailed for the most part at the upper levels. At some time in May, however, an army committee of the more typical construction came into being, under undetermined circumstances.⁴⁶

Although even the most elementary documentation on the origins of committees in most armies is lacking, a sufficient amount of information from diverse sources is available on the Twelfth and Special armies (Northern and Southwestern fronts, respectively). Of all the armies, the Twelfth was by the end of March the most advanced in developing a complete committee system. Almost a month ahead of other armies it had established an army committee (during the Riga celebrations of March 8-9), which took the initiative in establishing lower-level committees. There were separate "soviets" for soldiers and officers, each of which formed its own executive committee (Iskosol and Iskomof, respectively). The delegates were to report to their respective units, organize committees, and assemble again in one week to work out a set of regulations.⁴⁷ Lieutenant G. D. Kuchin, a prominent Menshevik close to Tsereteli, was elected chairman of Iskomof; Colonel I. I. Vatsetis, later a famous Red commander and at the time a commander in the Latvian rifle brigades, and a Colonel Rodzianko, kinsman of the Duma president, were also members. The soldiers' executive committee consisted almost entirely of representatives from the rear technical services, who, one can assume, were skilled workmen and craftsmen or semieducated clerks and specialists (thirteen were communications, hospital, automotive, or aviation personnel, as opposed to one infantryman, one artilleryman, and two Cossacks).⁴⁸

A March 22 memorandum of the officers' deputies to War Min-

⁴⁶ Mints (II, 451) and other Soviet works briefly record its establishment in late April, but give no concrete information other than that it was under the bootheel of its commander, Gen. Kornilov. The earliest available numbers of the committee organ (*Izvestiia Armeiskago Komiteta VIII-oi Armii*, May 15, and following issues) reflect a typical pro-Soviet, but defensist, line.

⁴⁷ See Chemodanov, pp. 74-76.

⁴⁸ See V. I. Miller, in *Sverzhenie samoderzhaviia*, p. 178.

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ister Guchkov described the committees' structure as follows: company committees of five representatives elected by the soldiers (presumably officers were eligible); regimental committees composed of one deputy per company or equivalent unit (totaling twenty-five to thirty deputies), with a soldier-officer ratio of five to one; joint soldier-officer committees in some regiments, separate committees in others; and above this level, separate soldiers' and officers' committees, which were to cooperate as needed. The Soviet of Soldiers' and Officers' Deputies of the Twelfth Army consisted (in theory) of a plenary monthly meeting of all divisional and corps committees, to which were responsible the two permanent executive committees and their presidia located at staff headquarters in Riga; the presidia were to be in daily communication with the command. The memorandum stressed that deputies were freely elected by their units and were not subject to confirmation. For the most part, the definition of committee functions does not seem unusual, namely, "support of internal order, re-ordering of military life on new principles, mediation of conflicts between officers and soldiers, educational and informational activity." In addition, however, it specifies "struggle with counter-revolution" and goes on to propose that the committees, in cooperation with special commissars of the government, should gather information on counterrevolutionary and pro-German higher officers, particularly those of Baltic extraction. Indeed, this counterespionage proposal was the chief purpose of the memorandum and is a measure of the extent to which Germanomania infected even the democratic officers and colored their suspicions of the higher command. It also demonstrates the tendency of the committees to view themselves as special organs of "control" on behalf of the Revolution and thus as justified in exceeding the bounds normally acceptable to the command structure. The document is all the more striking in that it was signed by two colonels and a captain, among others. The separation of officer and soldier hierarchies, although encouraged by Alekseev's original instructions, was seldom followed on other fronts, and by mid-summer the two organizations in the Twelfth Army had combined as well.⁴⁹

The lower committees, however, were by no means under the control of Iskosol. The split between the upper and lower committee levels developed earlier here and was more pronounced

⁴⁹ For the text of the memorandum, see Shliapnikov, III, 303-11.

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than in any other army, perhaps because the army executive was created first and was dominated at the outset by rear technical and staff units. The proximity of the Twelfth Army to the capital and to Baltic metropolitan centers meant that, more than on any other sector of the front, lower-level formations were subject to the direct influence of newspapers, eyewitnesses, and agitators of political parties. The naval and military installations that guarded the littoral of the Finnish and Riga gulfs were more a part of the revolutionary nexus of the cities than of that of the front, and yet many of them were situated cheek by jowl with line units subordinate to the Twelfth Army. The Bolsheviks exercised considerable influence in these areas from the very first weeks of the Revolution and gained control over the committee organizations of a number of units, most notably in the XLII and XLIII army corps (located in Finland and near Riga, respectively) and the Latvian rifle brigades (stationed in Riga itself). A Bolshevik group that had been in existence since before the Revolution was able to gain control of the committee of the 436th Novoladozhskii Infantry Regiment, and from there its influence was propelled into higher committees (of the 109th Division and XLIII Corps). From this stronghold the Bolsheviks were able to conduct a vigorous propaganda campaign throughout the Twelfth Army and to pose a constant challenge to the authority of Iskosol, while from Riga the Latvian Bolsheviks bombarded the Latvian brigades with propaganda and by mid-May exercised firm control over those units.⁵⁰

The Novoladozhskii Regiment adopted an *ustav* (regulations) on March 14 that in a number of respects reflected its genesis in the revolutionary turmoil of early March and that served as a model for other units that were to come under Bolshevik influence.⁵¹ It elaborated a radically democratic committee structure from the platoon upward; there was no specified number or sepa-

⁵⁰ See M. I. Kapustin, *Soldaty severnogo fronta v bor'be za vlast'sovetov* (Moscow, 1957), pp. 29-30 and passim, and Mints, II, 459-63. The same basic information on Bolshevik-dominated units is repeated in all Soviet works, but there is ample evidence from independent sources on their influence; see, for example, Chemodanov, pp. 86ff. The spread of Bolshevik influence at the front will be treated systematically in the second volume of the present work.

⁵¹ The *ustav* and program appeared in the first issue of *Okopnaia Pravda* of April 30, where it is dated March 14. The program was printed earlier in *Pravda*, March 21, where it appears with the endorsement of six infantry regiments and seven artillery and technical units.

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rate representation for officers (they were *eligible* for election on a par with soldiers), and it provided for referenda on important issues and the right of recall of deputies. The regimental Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies of the Novoladozhskii Regiment was to consist of one deputy per company or specialized unit, out of which was to be formed a five-man executive committee and several commissions. Like many other committee statutes, this one specifically assigned to the committees such functions as information and education on political questions, supervision of accounts and supplies, and mediation of soldier-officer disputes. But in this case each point was given a sweeping construction that precluded any limitation or tutelage from above. Regular discussions of newspapers, proclamations, and orders were provided for, as well as "meetings for agitational purposes." Control over supplies was interpreted to include specifically military supplies and weapons, and surveillance was to be exercised over the staff and "all proposed military operations." The right of removal of officers was specifically provided for, but qualified:

The question of depriving officers and soldiers of their freedom is decided exclusively by the regimental committee with respect to persons who have revealed their criminal character with respect to the new order in Russia. No usurpation of this function by individuals will be permitted.

Naturally such claims could be made only in units where officers had already completely lost control, and such units were particularly numerous in the region of the Twelfth Army.

Along with the regulations, a program of eighteen points was adopted, calling for the eight-hour day, an immediate constituent assembly, confiscation of imperial, church, and private lands, a democratic republic, and complete support for the Petrograd Soviet (but not as yet "all power" or unequivocal opposition to the war), which in essence was the Bolshevik program prior to the publication of the April theses. Only those who accepted the "basic socialist program" were to be allowed to stand as deputies. A handful of Bolsheviks, therefore, was able to entrench itself and obtain formal endorsement of its program in the first few weeks by catering to the current mood of the soldiers and encouraging their most militant demands. One should not conclude, however, that the Bolsheviks deliberately encouraged disorders and violence. Rather, they took advantage of the period of turmoil to structure

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the relationship with the command so as to deprive it of any real power, which they in fact vested solely in the committee while leaving the responsibility for the *execution* of duly ratified military orders to the officers. Following the provisions of Order No. One, the *ustav* upheld regular military duties and execution of orders, insofar as they did not conflict with committee decisions, but in each case they were to be carefully explained.

At the other extreme, Colonel Makhrov of the 13th Siberian Rifle Regiment (whose skillful handling of the abdication was discussed above) took the committee system in hand and even made use of it to reinstate his authority and to protect it from further assaults from below. He cooperated in the election of delegates to Riga and himself accompanied the soldiers to Riga, taking no offense at their enthusiasms (such as red ribbons) and entering fully into the spirit of the occasion. He was impressed with the chairman of the army committee, M. D. Romm, whom he characterized as a brilliant orator and "an intelligent and educated person who upheld the legitimate authority of the officers." A staff officer, Lieutenant Colonel Leontiev, was very upset over the proceedings, particularly the wearing of red ribbons, but was ordered by Makhrov to accept gracefully his election as chairman of the officers' committee. To Makhrov's reminder of the tsar's last wish that they be loyal to the new government, Leontiev replied: "No, that's not the last word! There will be a counterrevolution yet!"⁵²

The soldiers' committee held its first session on March 14 and composed a very flattering address to Makhrov, which was included in the orders of the day:

We greet in your person our leader, deeply convinced, Mister Colonel, that only under your leadership will we obtain victory in the tasks assigned to us, and cherishing in our hearts and minds your words that "it is better to lay our bones to rest here than to allow our immemorial foe into the new free Russia, our beloved native land." Hurrah!⁵³

By fully appropriating the lavish oratorical style of March, which blended patriotism and fervor for the new order, Makhrov had won the complete loyalty of the committee and of his regiment. The primary activity of the committees, both officer and soldier, was education and propaganda. Regular sessions were held for

⁵² MS, pp. 145, 147.

⁵³ Ibid., Documents (regimental order for Mar. 14).

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the reading of newspapers and answering of questions. Because the army was situated close to Riga and less disciplined units, leaving it open to the constant danger of agitators who might call improvised meetings and upset carefully controlled arrangements, the committee worked out systematic methods of counteragitation. The reputation of Makhrov was such that (he claims) the reaction of the men to the agitators was: "Don't you dare touch our commander. The very first day he came to the regiment he increased our chow. Go fly a kite!"⁵⁴ Nevertheless, on the committee's advice, Makhrov did not immediately resume training exercises, nor did he enforce crisp saluting and correct bearing for those on watch. Makhrov concedes that his enthusiasm for the Revolution and "conscious discipline" was contrived to keep the situation in hand and that at bottom he was as much an unreconstructed monarchist as Leontiev.

Things were not as smooth in other regiments of the division. Late one night the division commander, Kartsev, paid an unobtrusive visit to inquire about the condition of the regiment and was astounded to learn from Makhrov that all was in perfect order. In all other regiments of the division the situation was out of control: in two, the commanders had completely surrendered to the committees, approved all their decisions without protest, and endured humiliations; in a third, where officers were trying to hold the line, there was danger of violence because the regimental committee's first act had been to hold a memorial service for sixteen soldiers shot by a field court the previous December. Kartsev himself was a candidate for lynching, as he had signed the execution order. (At the end of April he indeed became a victim, and Makhrov had the unpleasant task of not allowing his own officers to pay respects to their divisional chief for fear of stirring up trouble in the regiment.)⁵⁵ Not every regiment, of course, was about to lynch its commander, but neither were there many that surrounded him with a personality cult. Nevertheless, such contrasts appeared side by side, particularly in the armies of the Northern Front, which felt the influence of the urban centers most strongly.⁵⁶

The Special Army, on the Southwestern Front two hundred miles west of Kiev, particularly suffered from revolutionary turbu-

⁵⁴ MS, p. 161.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 151, 162.

⁵⁶ Chemodanov's experiences as a committeeman, which he recounts in great detail (op. cit., chaps. 10-11), were midway between these extremes.

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lence and regularized its committee structure only with difficulty. Early in March the army included all the regiments of the guards, which were kept in a state of constant agitation by contacts with their reserve units in Petrograd; moreover, the local garrison soviet at Lutsk was particularly aggressive in organizing the nearby front units. The establishment of committees had to take place in the midst of confusion created by the transfer in April of two guards divisions from the Special Army to the Seventh and Eleventh armies far to the south and the addition of battered units from General Lesh's Third Army, including the XXXI Corps. In the first two weeks of April the Special Army commander, General V. I. Gurko, apparently allowed the garrison soviet to meet freely and contact front units, but he tried to control the proceedings by having trusted staff officers participate in the deliberations.⁵⁷ On March 16, he issued a "Statute and Instructions to the Soviet of Electors of the Special Army," which had been worked out by the Lutsk Soviet and elected representatives of the front.⁵⁸ The instructions did not call for committees but provided for elections (two soldiers per regiment, two officers per division) to an army conference to be held two weeks later. Several formations, specifically the V and XXII corps, interpreted this as an authorization of committees and issued corresponding orders (March 16 and 22, respectively).⁵⁹ Before the congress met on the twenty-second, General Baluev, who had taken over from General Gurko as commander, issued a general order regulating committees. Five days later 602 soldiers and 215 officers attended the army conference as authorized deputies.⁶⁰ A number of the guards units had instituted committees in advance of Baluev's general order; Lieutenant Mitrofanov of the Preobrazhenskii Regiment noted in his diary for the nineteenth that a divisional order on committees had been issued and that the elections in his regiment were to take

⁵⁷ The basic information for the Special Army comes from the organ of the army committee, *IzOA*, which began publication on April 5 (the first few issues have not been preserved). Also available is the staff organ *Vestnik Osboi Armii*, but it gives little information other than expressions of hostility.

⁵⁸ See Vasilii Gurko, *Memories*, pp. 270-71, and Gerua, II, pp. 169ff. The text of the statute is in Shliapnikov, IV, 349-52, where it is recorded that the assembly that ratified it on March 15 consisted of 350 soldiers and 53 officers from 85 units from the front and 83 from the rear.

⁵⁹ See V. I. Miller, in *OGV*, p. 80. ⁶⁰ *IzOA*, Apr. 16, 1917.

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place the following day. He was elected by his fellow officers as a deputy to the army congress, but for some reason did not attend.⁶¹

The army conference, held on March 27-30, was badly split between prosoviet intellectuals and soldiers on the one hand, and vociferously antisoviet officers on the other.⁶² A resolution modeled after the Petrograd Soviet's position on the war ("no annexations or indemnities") was passed, but the debate was marked by persistent catcalls, obstructionism, and denunciations. Although the congress established an army committee and commissions on juridical, educational, and officer-soldier affairs, the deep split and rancor on virtually every question (including the election of a co-chairman and a *nakaz*, or instruction, for the deputation to Petrograd) led to the premature closing of the conference and the scheduling of a new one for several weeks later. One suspects that the staff officers loyal to Gurko were attempting to control the proceedings and obtain resolutions on the war and military discipline acceptable to the command, and that they reacted vehemently when soviet-oriented elements proved to have a majority.⁶³ By the first week in April the army committee was making use of the printing facilities of the army headquarters to put out its own newspaper and was distributing it to corps units through the army communications network, but the command soon withdrew its cooperation when it realized it could not control the organ's direction.

Among the few available glimpses into the introduction of lower-level committees in the Special Army, one of the most revealing is a letter written on March 21, 1917, by Captain B. V. Sergeev, who at the time commanded a battalion in the *Finlandskii* Guards Regiment:

We are in the trenches again. I am resting up a bit and recovering my nerves. I don't have to bother with company matters, as everything has been handed over to the gentlemen deputies except purely technical military affairs. It

⁶¹ See MS (entries for Mar. 24, 25, and Apr. 1).

⁶² See *IzOA*, Apr. 16 and 17.

⁶³ Gerua states that "In this period of turmoil at the top, the troops continued by inertia to sit in the trenches, owing to the self-sacrificing activity of the younger staff officers, who suddenly turned into a corps of 'right demagogues,' striving to refute, or at least contain, left propaganda" (II, 170).

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wouldn't be bad if we stayed here a while, so that things will remain quiet. If we go into reserve again, then all sorts of meetings and expressions of dissatisfaction will start up again.⁶⁴

Even thirty years of living in exile did not alter Sergeev's rather surprising opinions about the committees. He was glad that the committees took over commissary matters, since dissatisfaction over bad food was his chief headache as a commander. But even more surprising is his verdict on Order No. One:

It was a great mistake not to publish Order No. One with necessary changes and explanations with regard to the front. . . . As it was, it was introduced from below and put the officers in an unbearable position. . . . The soldiers held fast to their rights, which the officers, in their view, were trying to conceal from them.⁶⁵

This suggests that the universal enthusiasm for Order No. One easily persuaded some officers that it was better to make it official than to be faced with it as an independently held position of their men, and it also serves to explain why Alekseev's modest proposal in Order No. 2137 let loose the avalanche that ended in a fully developed system of representative committees.

On the Rumanian Front there was a considerable delay in introducing committees. Not only did the remoteness from Russian soil play a role, but the command structure was also a veritable nest of incorrigible counterrevolutionaries.⁶⁶ The front chief, General Sakharov, and the Ninth Army commander, General Lechitskii, were particularly hostile to the Revolution and even resisted such legally channeled reforms as Order No. 114. On hearing of Brusilov's energetic promotion of committees in pursuance of Order No. 2137, General Sakharov inquired of Stavka whether in fact this was desirable and received the unwelcome reply that committees were not only desirable but also "vital," and that detailed instructions would follow.⁶⁷ This prompted his authorization Order No. 270 (March 24) to army commanders, which in fact provided only for sanitized, staff-dominated organizations. A delegation of the garrison soviet in Jassy brought a remarkable protest to Petrograd, which was subsequently printed in *Pravda* on April 13:

⁶⁴ *Finlandets*, xxxii, 26-27.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁶⁶ See Wrangel, pp. 16-29, and Shinkarenko-Brusilov, MS, pp. 290ff.

⁶⁷ *RDRA*, p. 40.

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The staff of the front is hampering by all means possible the organization of the Army out of fear and distrust of the soldiers.

(a) It was compelled to take steps only after the soldiers proceeded to organize themselves.

(b) Order No. 270 on the organization of soviets was no sooner published on March 24 than on March 25 an organizational assembly took place at staff headquarters of carefully selected persons of a particular tendency—exclusively staff officers and a negligible number of soldiers.

(c) Order No. 270 . . . established the parity principle of officers and soldiers and the curial system of elections. Soviets are convoked only upon the specific orders of unit commanders. . . . Many units in the region have declared a boycott of the elections.⁶⁸

The Jassy Soviet called upon Petrograd authorities to appoint a commission to look into the activities of the reactionary staff of the Rumanian Front and to secure a new order stipulating a more democratic organization. Whether this had any effect or not, there was in fact a shake-up in the command: by late April Lechitskii, Sakharov, and several of the most reactionary commanders had been replaced, and the Ninth and Sixth armies (no information is available on the smaller Fourth Army) had formed well-organized, prosoviet committees.

The Sixth Army, with its rear headquarters in Bolgrad on the lower Pruth (a short two hundred kilometers from Odessa), was exceptional for the Rumanian Front in that its commander, General Tsurikov, had authorized elections to divisional and corps assemblies as early as March 15 on the model of already existing garrison soviets in Bolgrad and Chadyr-Longa (one officer to ten soldiers). Committees in individual units sprang up in response (for example, the 3rd Elizavetgrad Hussars on March 19). In reply to General Sakharov's angry demand of March 21 to know on what authority he based his action, Tsurikov appealed to the general rights of citizenship conferred on all military personnel by the new government (apparently he did not know of Order No. 2137). Sakharov administered an official reprimand, which was confirmed by Alekseev ("unnecessarily creating antagonistic relations"), but he nevertheless did not require the Sixth Army to

⁶⁸ *VOSR. Aprel'skii krizis*, p. 496.

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restructure its more liberal provisions to conform to Order No. 270.⁶⁹

General Lechitskii's obstructionism had serious repercussions for the lower levels of command, as is well documented for General E. K. Miller's XXVI Corps (located in Bukowina, it was the unit of the Rumanian Front that adjoined Brusilov's Southwestern Front).⁷⁰ Miller was one of those perceptive commanders who fully appreciated the necessity of executing immediately all instructions of the Provisional Government, however novel, and of dealing tolerantly with minor breaches of military etiquette. Nevertheless, he was a stern disciplinarian and a firm believer in the inviolability of military orders and regulations. The abdication, the oath, and Order No. 114 all went without incident in his corps, although there had been some delay in the execution of the latter while some disputed matters were clarified. At headquarters the Revolution had been openly celebrated with street parades and occasional displays of red banners and bunting, which he tolerated, as well as improvised political meetings and propaganda activity initiated by a certain Lande, a veterinarian attached to one of his divisions. He called the latter in around the sixteenth to caution him to keep his activities within certain limits, that is, to confine himself to organizing discussion groups rather than large meetings, to which the veterinarian agreed. From Lande he learned of committees formed spontaneously in imitation of neighboring units to the north, where they had already been authorized by Brusilov. Alert to the danger of unrest on these grounds, Miller instructed his divisional commanders not to undertake repressive measures against those participating in elections but to inform them that the neighboring units were acting with the permission of their senior commander, while the XXVI Corps, which was subordinate to the Rumanian Front, had not yet received authorization from the front commander. At the same time, he tried to elicit clear instructions from General Lechitskii on this and other troubling issues; the response was limited to the question of red ribbons—they were illegal!

Unfortunately for himself, Miller felt obliged to enforce the latter instruction, although he did not prohibit red flags and bunting on buildings and installations. On the twentieth came a front order to select one soldier and one officer per division for a depu-

⁶⁹ See V. I. Miller, *Soldatskie komitety*, pp. 95-100.

⁷⁰ See E. K. Miller, MS, pp. 5-24, for the details that follow.

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tation to Petrograd, "following the example of other units." Miller complied, although he does not specify how the delegates were chosen. At the beginning of Holy Week (probably the last week of March) he finally received an authorization order from army headquarters for committees (a belated relay of the front order of the twenty-fourth) and proceeded to make immediate arrangements for its execution. Apparently committees had already been chosen on the company and regiment levels, but not on the division and corps level, when Stavka Order No. 51 (March 30) altered the order of election; regardless of possible complications, Miller ordered new elections. On April 5 and 6 he issued instructions on committee functions, which he specified as monitoring commissary affairs, determining eligibility and sequence for leaves, and punishing major breaches of discipline. Senior officers were ordered to do everything possible to guarantee a smooth relationship with the new institutions.

The following day marching companies arrived sporting red ribbons, and when Miller ordered that they be removed and that the standard bearer step out of ranks to post their red flags for a review (this, he felt, did not violate instructions), he was arrested by a disorderly mob.⁷¹ Although the trivial reason for his arrest was typical of March incidents, the act was confirmed by a hastily summoned corps congress. In effect, the congress took complete control. General Miller was kept under arrest for three days, during which time he was subjected to constant verbal and physical abuse and allowed to converse with his chief of staff on military operations only in the presence of soldier-deputies. In the meantime, the accusations against him were conveyed to War Minister Guchkov. General Lechitskii's attempts to intervene only demonstrated the extent to which command authority had been shattered by the incident, as he reported to Guchkov:

Yesterday I personally visited the XXVI Corps and attended the session of the corps congress. The mood is extremely tense. The corps congress [is] a wild, undisciplined, mindless mob, the chairman, a veterinarian, a typical agitator [Lande?]; there are many such agitators among the officers. The troops of the corps are terribly worked up against the corps commander. It is impossible to rely on a single unit for the restoration of order. Despite all persuasion, the corps

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 25ff.

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congress resolved to send General Miller to the War Minister in Petrograd with a convoy of six delegates.⁷²

The incident illustrates the futility of attempts to contain the committee revolution through repression or obstruction from above. In this case the consequences of even a week's delay are apparent: the men found out about the practices on other fronts through newspapers or the grapevine and immediately accused their superiors of counterrevolutionary activities and concealment of orders. Had Lechitskii acted promptly on his receipt of the front order (itself belated), and had he not been so obsessed with red ribbons, the corps congress would have been convoked on General Miller's order, he would have addressed it in a spirit loyal to the new order, and the red ribbon incident would probably never have occurred, or the congress would have revoked the action. Instead, a revolutionary organization hostile to the command structure worked its will by force and could not be brought into line. The injustice of the situation was that Lechitskii, the genuine counterrevolutionary, was left untouched, and General Miller, who for the most part had been correct and flexible in following the orders of the government, paid the penalty. The charges leveled against him are all familiar—bearing a German name, being a “friend of Nikolasha,” holding up orders, disciplining for red ribbons. But the most likely reason why the corps congress confirmed the arrest is that Miller took decisive countermeasures against fraternization at Eastertime (a question to be explored in Chapter IX below).⁷³ Again, the incident confirms that for the command structure there was no other reasonable course in the month of March than to sanction the representational system officially, to attempt to work with it for certain common purposes, and to hope that out of it a new sort of democratic military order would emerge. Certainly the new arrangements were not proof against further difficulties, and the command could not rightfully expect to harness the committees to its own purposes, but the only alternative was the complete revolutionizing of the Army from below and an early collapse of the front. For the time being, the most realistic goal of the more enlightened commanders was to insulate the committees as far as possible from the political concerns of the rear, to involve them in constructive practical activi-

⁷² Report of Apr. 8, in *RDRA*, p. 53.

⁷³ On the charges against Miller, see his manuscript report, pp. 41ff.

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ties, and to secure their agreement to the necessity of cooperative efforts to achieve victory over the external foe. In March and early April this option remained open because the committees had been legitimized through the auspices of command authority and not through the intervention of the Petrograd Soviet.



8. Arrest of a Policeman during the February Uprising. (*Portfolio of the European War . . . from the Midweek Pictorial of the New York Times*, distributed by the Circulation Bureau of the New York Times, Inc. [n.p., n.d.])



9. Arrested Officers Brought to the Tauride Palace. (Stinton Jones, *Russia in Revolution: Being the Experiences of an Englishman in Petrograd during the Upheaval* [London: L. Jenkins, Ltd., 1917])



10. A Soldiers' Meeting at the Front (British officers in the foreground). (*Times History of the War*, XIII [London, 1917])

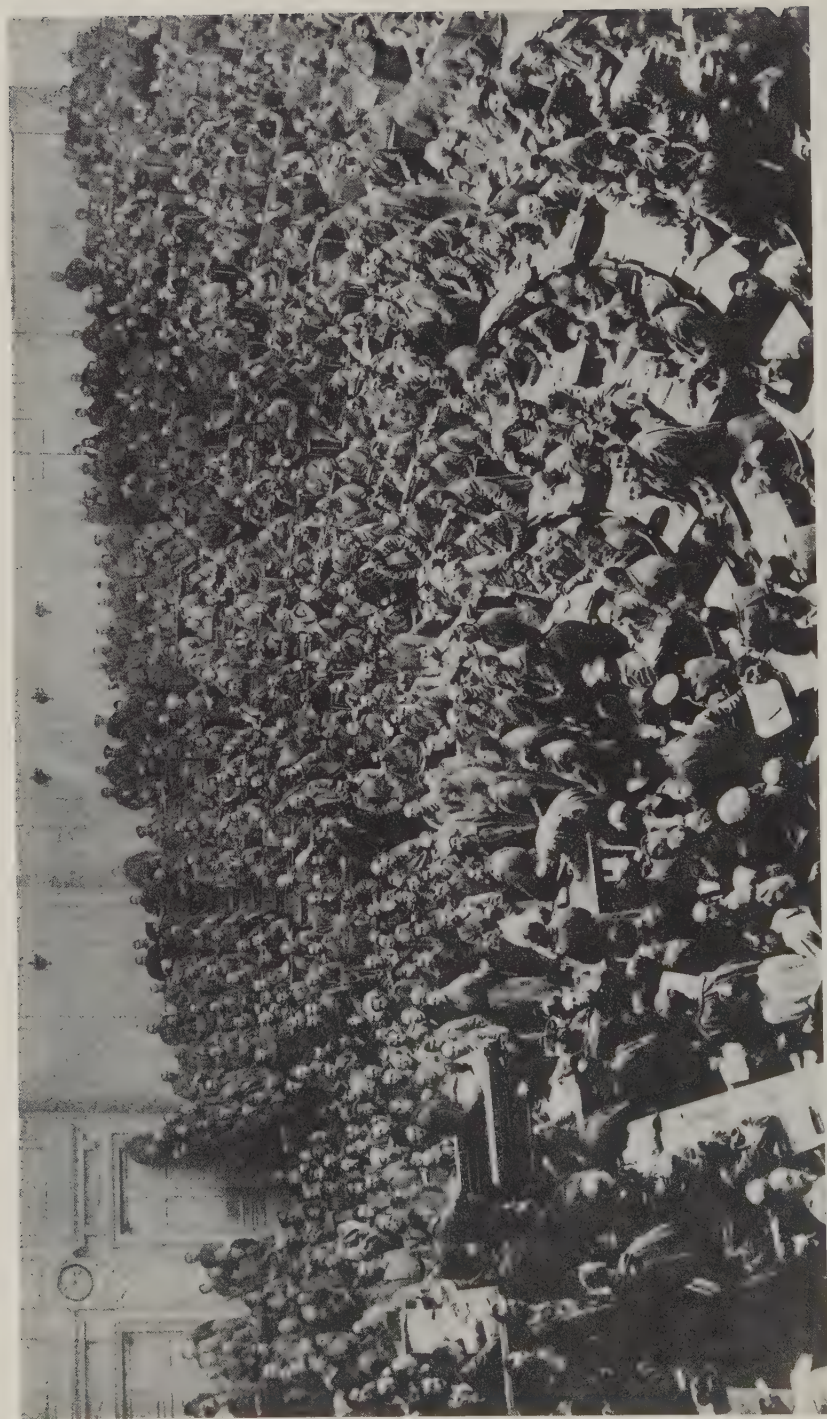


11. Celebration of the Revolution at the Front. (*Portfolio of the European War*)



12. Regiment at the Front Voting "No Confidence" in Its Officers (before and after). (*Belyi Arkhiv*, VI [Belgrad, 1926])





13. Session of the Soldiers' Section of the Petrograd Soviet. (*Portfolio of the European War*)

CHAPTER VIII



CRISIS AND REALIGNMENT WITH THE SOVIETS

THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER brought out that the army committees contained a potential to develop either into props to command authority or into counterauthorities on the model of the soviets. The command structure, of course, was banking heavily on the former alternative and had embarked on this hazardous course precisely to ward off the second. By the end of March the command structure appeared to have gained the upper hand. Although it had been compelled to concede a democratic representational structure, it seemed to have achieved a consensus with the elected leadership on a vigorous prosecution of the war, a full mobilization of the rear in support of the front, strict subordination and discipline with respect to military orders, and finally the restoration of harmony between officers and soldiers. Lingerings suspicions of the senior officers' counterrevolutionary or pro-German designs appeared to have been brought under control: officers with the worst reputations had been removed, often by the command itself in order to placate the soldiers, and the less prominent irreconcilables assumed protective coloration. From the generals at Stavka on down to captains and lieutenants, the officer corps at the front protested its loyalty to the new government, its common joy with the soldiers over the new free Russia, and its willingness to join all citizens in defending the new freedom "to the last drop of blood." Such appeals often brought about a momentary relaxation of tensions and turned around otherwise dangerous situations.

Most hopeful to the command structure was that the Petrograd Soviet had not intruded too vigorously into the creation of the committees, and, for the most part, the credit for them had been reaped by the government and the military leadership. Commanders had even been relatively successful in convincing the freshly

elected deputies that the direct appeals of the Soviet to the front were undermining the prestige of the government and undercutting military discipline, which cooled the initial ardor for Order No. One. Now that its essential points had been granted "legally" by the War Ministry's Order No. 114 and other official regulations on committees, there was no longer any need of a rival authority. A surprising number of delegations to the capital carried with them angry resolutions critical of "dual authority" in the rear and of slackness in general in supporting the war effort, putting considerable pressure on the Soviet to mute its revolutionary stance vis-à-vis the Provisional Government. The command structure to a large extent successfully implanted the notion that the Revolution had been substantially accomplished and that it was time to put a stop to "partisan politics" so that all groups of society could unite in the overriding cause of winning the war.

Until the end of March events seemed to be unfolding according to design. The soldiers proved susceptible to appeals to defend their newly won freedom against Wilhelm's bayonets; the capital press fastened onto the concerns of the front and mounted a campaign of ever intensifying volume; and the slogans "War to Full Victory!" and "Soldiers to Their Trenches, Workers to Their Benches!" were broadcast in all possible variants. As it became obvious that the labor struggles connected with the March upheaval were not being quickly resolved—the workers were not returning to their benches, but were holding out for the eight-hour day, substantial increases in wages, and the removal of a good share of the supervisory personnel in the factories—the press campaign turned into an assault on the laxity and egotism of the workers. Obliquely at first, the Soviet was called upon to "discipline" its followers and to mobilize them behind the national effort; when this failed to produce instantaneous results, the Soviet leadership was directly accused of distracting the country with the politics of "continuing the Revolution" and of cultivating in its worker and soldier constituents a preoccupation with their narrow and mundane interests rather than with the common cause.

The Soviet was put on the defensive by these attacks and for a time was obliged to claim (rather unconvincingly) that the workers were actually making every effort to get production going again but that they were hampered by the self-serving actions of the employers. Gradually the Soviet leaders became aware that their opponents were imposing the terms of the struggle and that

the intent was no less than to neutralize the moral authority of the Soviet and, consequently, to revoke the basic gains of the Revolution. Most unpleasantly, they realized that the bourgeois forces had outflanked them by capitalizing on the sentiments of the front soldiers and that if this process were not arrested and reversed, the Soviet's base of support in the representative organizations would be precipitously eroded and their opponents' designs would triumph in the Army and throughout the country. In the last few days of March the pro-Soviet forces mounted a vigorous effort to persuade the front soldiers that the bourgeois press, in conspiracy with counterrevolutionary officers, was trying to drive a wedge between workers and soldiers and thus divide the forces of the Revolution. Within the first ten days or so of April this campaign was remarkably successful, so that the front deputations returned to their units fully persuaded that they had been deliberately deceived and that the only guarantee against counterrevolution was solidarity with the workers through the Soviet. Moreover, for the first time they understood and strongly supported the logic behind the Soviet's "Peace Manifesto to the Peoples of the World" of March 14, which was clearly formulated in the resolution on war and peace of the First All-Russian Conference of Soviets (March 29–April 3). Clearly, acquisitive, imperialist intent lurked behind the patriotic campaign of their senior officers and the non-socialist press. Logically, the Soviet should function as a control over the Provisional Government, which was now perceived to be "bourgeois."

Through this confrontation and other parallel channels the soldiers' committees, especially at the army and higher levels, became fully cognizant of the issues at stake and came down foursquare in support of the Soviet's positions. In addition to the reports of the returning deputations, the influence of socialist newspapers, which were arriving in increasing numbers, was beginning to be felt, particularly their accounts of the Conference of Soviets. Moreover, in the next few weeks there was a round of army and front congresses at which Soviet positions on major issues were thrashed out and endorsed; above all, the peace formula of "no annexations or indemnities" was put forth as an explicit alternative to the bourgeois formula of "war to full victory in cooperation with our glorious Allies." Thus the strategy of the command structure and the metropolitan press suffered an embarrassing defeat, and all the old sores of soldier-officer conflict were reopened. Most im-

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portant, the attempt to make the committees an instrument of government and command authority had failed, and the latter now very much regretted the effort it had put into establishing them. The final outcome of this crisis was that the front committees and their soldier constituencies became irrevocably aligned with the Soviet, and in effect, the system of dual power was extended to the front. The present chapter will attempt to recount these developments in detail; taken together, they represent the culmination of the process of social and political cleavage that had been implicit in the Revolution from the very beginning and was only to be resolved by the advent of "Soviet power."



The thread must be picked up at that point late in March when front deputations of every size and description began turning up in the capital. At the outset they almost universally manifested a critical stance toward various phenomena of the rear, and questioned, if they did not challenge outright, the policies of the Soviet. Above all, they wished to explore the truth of the allegations that the workers were sitting on their hands instead of turning out shells. To a certain extent the psychology of these deputations is understandable in terms of the circumstances under which they were chosen. A good many of them, particularly those officially representing the army level, were elected indirectly through several levels (company, regiment, division) on the basis of parity between soldiers and officers, each time being given exhortations and instructions from commanding officers. Somewhat awed by the gravity of their mission and disarmed by the unaccustomed familiar relationship with officer-delegates, they easily lent themselves to the suggestions that they were defending the new freedom with their lives but that the rear was still celebrating it. When expressed a few weeks before by known reactionary officers, such sentiments had aroused indignation, but now, on the lips of officer-comrades who like themselves had been freely elected by their fellows and who seemed sincere in their support of the Revolution, they sounded quite convincing. General Miller, for example, arranged for the election of deputies from his corps to Petrograd in compliance with instructions from front headquarters, advising them at their departure that they should assure the Provisional Government of the loyalty of the front to the oath and of its determination to defend the fatherland against the enemy. One

delegate, probably an officer, asked why the Petrograd Soviet interfered so flagrantly in the legitimate affairs of the Provisional Government, to which Miller cautiously replied that they should seek the answer in Petrograd and bring back a report. Privately, Miller felt that "the delegates were fully aware of the necessity to carry on the war to a victorious conclusion."¹ This was ten days before Miller's arrest, and there was no hint of tension.

The soldier-delegates lent credence to all these criticisms of the rear because the same points were being made by the metropolitan press, from which they had become accustomed to obtain the "truth" that was otherwise supposedly concealed from them. It should be noted that none of the socialist newspapers, not even the *Izvestiia* of the Petrograd Soviet, as yet reached the front regularly, and that the chief sources of information were still the large established dailies—*Rech'*, *Birzheviia Vedomosti*, *Novoe Vremia*, *Russkoe Slovo*, and *Kievskaiia Mysl'*—all of them representing the opinion of the parties of the center and right. To be sure, a number of the delegates were junior officers and technical specialists who embraced at least a mild form of populist socialism, but military men of this type were less susceptible to irrational fears of malevolent intent by senior officers and were severely afflicted by "March defensism." Thus, although pro-Soviet by inclination, they might have reservations about Order No. One and be deeply concerned about dual authority and the disorganization of production. All grades of military personnel at the front were alarmed over the suspension of replacements from the capital and the interruption of training. Slackers of all sorts—*belobiletniki*, simulators, idle staff officers in rear administrations, former police and gendarmes—were bitterly resented. A front versus rear mentality was thus built into the existing situation, which could easily be played upon by commanders or handpicked officer-delegates. In such a context the officers of the delegation could easily set the tone and carry along impressionable soldier-delegates.

On about March 25 significant numbers of delegates began to appear in the capital, first as scattered deputations from individual regiments, artillery divisions, aviation and technical units, and garisons of the front area, but by the end of the month the large army delegations were arriving from as far away as the Rumanian and Caucasus fronts. A perusal of newspapers of this period establishes that each of the fourteen armies had sent an official depu-

¹ E. K. Miller, MS, pp. 21-22.

tation by mid-April (and some of them, such as the Seventh Army, more than one), as had at least several dozen units of lesser size.² Invariably, a ceremonial review in the Catherine Hall of the Tau-ride Palace, which was usually highlighted by an address by Chkheidze, Rodzianko, or other political figures, was followed by attempts, frequently unsuccessful, to obtain interviews and appearances at the Soviet, where the delegates might or might not have the opportunity to read *nakazy* (prepared statements) from their constituencies. Only with great difficulty could they gain a serious hearing for the questions that agitated them. In the ceremonial exchanges high-flown oratory spoiled the effect of serious complaints, interviews were perfunctory, and their speeches in the Soviet failed to have the desired impact on an audience that lived by its own slogans and concerns. Not infrequently their frustration turned into anger and resentment over the offhanded treatment.

Some of the *nakazy* addressed to the Soviet betrayed the unsympathetic influence of staff officers; for example, that of the 87th Infantry Division requested the Soviet "not to upset the army with extremist resolutions" and to "bend all its strength toward making shells and weapons," while that of the 129th Infantry Regiment warned the Soviet against sowing discord and stated flatly that "all your declarations and reforms are unacceptable to us unless they are transmitted with the sanction of the Provisional Government."³ Other statements, obviously the majority, voice the authentic concerns of the front, often combining various *nakazy* from lower-level units or striking a middle ground between soldier and officer sentiments (since most deputations were mixed). Some of the lists became extraordinarily long and were obviously compilations of suggestions, with no attempt to sort or reconcile. The *nakaz* of the 729th Infantry Regiment, for example, comprised forty-one items, including endorsements of a democratic republic, a constituent assembly, free primary and secondary education, a graded income tax, the speedy delivery of boots, free passage on

² The largest number of deputations are recorded in *VVP*, which, of course, had a vested interest in publicizing ardently patriotic pronouncements; but others, equally patriotic, appear in *IzPS*, *SS*, *Delo Naroda*, and *Rech'*. According to *VVP*, the following units paid their respects to the Provisional Government: on March 29, the First Army, the Reval Officers' Soviet, the 14th Grenadier Regiment (Tenth Army), the Piatagorsk garrison, the Eighth Siberian Rifle Regiment (Twelfth Army); on March 30, the Fourth Army, the 256th Infantry Regiment, the 15th Rifle Regiment, etc.

³ *SS*, Apr. 6 and 13.

trains, and an increase in the subsidy to soldiers' families. It also condemned desertion, inquired as to the rights and duties of the Soviet in relationship to the Provisional Government, and requested that all changes in regulations initiated by the Soviet be confirmed by a general order to the entire Army.⁴ The attention of many of the statements to political and social issues and to such petty symbolic matters as saluting indicate that they were not drafted under the tutelage of commanders or staff officers. And while it is true that some deputations were quite small and consisted of equal numbers of soldiers and officers, virtually all the statements of units and deputations of whatever size express in some degree anxiety or resentment over the state of affairs in the rear, whether over the slackening war production, the privileges of garrison soldiers, the influence of political parties on the government or the Soviet, the conflicts between the Soviet and the government, or the inordinate amount of idle personnel.

The points in the *nakazy* were usually expressed in the form of demands or urgent requests. Almost without exception the petitioners saw the vigorous prosecution of the war as the overriding issue and did not hesitate to use such high-flown phrases as "shedding the last drop of blood in the defense of Freedom," defeat of the "treacherous foe," defiance of "Wilhelm's bayonets," and wariness for the "craftiness of the German" to impress their concern upon the politicians. Conflict between the Soviet and "bourgeois" groups over war aims or the secret treaties had obviously not yet intruded into their consciousness. The few *nakazy* that reveal awareness of the Soviet "Manifesto to the Peoples of the World" do not treat it as incompatible with complete victory. Moreover, it is obvious that the soldiers at the front still saw the Soviet and the Provisional Government as mutually supportive, rather than as counterposing, authorities, and in some cases they appear not to have been able to distinguish between the two. The image of the Provisional Government as dominated by imperialists and propertied elements, and therefore requiring a democratic body to control it, had not yet taken form in their thinking. Even where control is suggested, it is to guarantee democratic liberties until the constituent assembly could take over, and not to enforce the Soviet view on war aims. And finally, very few of the *nakazy* raise the question of soldier-officer conflicts. Occasionally, they demand a purge of the monarchists and reactionaries on the commanding

⁴ *IzPS*, Mar. 26.

staff, in some cases with the support of officer-deputies as well, but by and large the stress is on comradely sharing of danger in the trenches by soldiers and officers in the determination to defend the newly free homeland. Although certain marks of caste distinction between officers and soldiers, such as saluting while off duty, are singled out as incompatible with the new order, the resolutions show a positive attitude toward military discipline and obedience to officers while "in the ranks" and especially with respect to operational matters. The chief sore points seem to have been taken care of by Order No. 114, while pending questions, such as saluting off duty, are treated as routine matters to be settled in due course (presumably by the special commission promised in Order No. 115).

One should note that the evidence for the above generalizations appears primarily in "bourgeois" organs or the Provisional Government's own *Vestnik*, and usually in synoptic form rather than in full text. It must be conceded that one scarcely obtains the same picture from the Soviet's *Izvestiia* or the socialist newspapers (except Plekhanov's *Edinstvo*). Obviously, the progovernment press had a vested interest in advertising loyal and patriotic sentiments, which the Soviet-oriented press did not share.⁵ Nevertheless, *Izvestiia*'s publication of the full proceedings of an assembly of the First Army (59 officers, 145 soldiers), which worked out a *nakaz* to be brought to Petrograd, is the best available record of such an episode and strikingly documents the mood of the front. Considering its origin, it cannot be suspected as a staff-inspired document; in fact, when the Chief of Staff of the Army addressed the assembly with a declaration that Russia vitally needed to conquer Constantinople and that the Army should remain outside politics, he was met with catcalls. The other orators expressed opinions ranging from strongly pro-Soviet to severely critical. When the chairman, P. Fedotov (later a prominent front Bolshevik), recommended that the assembly greet only the Soviet, since it was the representative of the working class and the true wielder of power, and that the Provisional Government be regarded merely as an administrative organ, his view was decisively rejected. Even he supported the goal of "full victory," albeit "without conquests," and the postponement of the eight-hour day until

⁵ See, for example, the resolutions of the 144th Infantry Regiment in *ibid.*, Apr. 2, and of the Dno Transfer Point, *ibid.*, Apr. 1.

the end of the war.⁶ One orator voiced strong support for the peace proposals of the Soviet Peace Manifesto, but it was not picked up by others and was ignored in the *nakaz*. The chief preoccupation of the assembly was with the interruption of war production and the suspension of replacements from Petrograd for the front, themes stressed most strongly by officers but obviously shared by the entire assembly.

The assembly resolved upon a surprising action to dramatize its concern, namely, to repair en masse to Petrograd to verify whether the factories were operating. It is worthwhile to quote the complete text of their address to the Soviet:

The delegates of units of the First Army appeal to you, gentlemen members of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. We who fight are filled with one desire—unity and order. We believe in you and swear to *defend our native land with our lives*. We know that *only victory will secure our freedom. But for this victory we need shells, bread, and again shells*. We will die for freedom and country. But you from the least to the greatest—*work to straighten out the rear*. Only *complete unity between the government and the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies* will secure victory and the triumph of freedom. *Do not stir discord in our midst with hasty decisions*. We patiently await [your response?] having faith in you and are firmly prepared to defend our native land from the most evil foe. Greetings from our brotherhood, which has sent us.

The salient point, of course, is the implied criticism of the Soviet for undercutting the government and failing to persuade the workers to resume war production. A corresponding address to the Provisional Government formulated a series of demands, including prompt convocation of the constituent assembly, "war to a victorious conclusion in union with the Allies for the freedom of all peoples," supply of shell, weapons, provisions, and replacements with all due haste, recruitment of slackers in the rear, particularly the police and gendarmes, increased support money for families of dead and wounded, and strict measures against deserters. It assured the Provisional Government that only its orders would be

⁶ Ibid., Mar. 30. A manifestly distorted account of the assembly by Fedotov appears in *V boiakh za vlast' sovetov*, pp. 13-16.

obeyed, but requested that commissars be sent to the front to prevent the sabotage of its orders by the command.

That such a complete record of the progovernment attitudes of a large front deputation appears in a Soviet organ lends confidence to the above characterization of the front deputations. The ceremonial receptions of the First Army deputation at the Tauride and its tour of the factories are recorded in a number of newspapers of the capital, which attempted to exploit the event systematically. The deputies, however, were persuaded by their inspection of the factories that they had been seriously misled, that the workers and the Soviet indeed supported the front, and that the factory owners, greedy to maintain their wartime profits, were in reality at fault for the continuing lag in production.⁷

A deputation of this size, of course, was exceptional, and the army deputations of the Southwest and Rumanian fronts were smaller and formed as a result of official instructions. Fedor Stepun, who represented the Seventh Army (Southwestern Front), affords a rare personal account of such a deputation.⁸ During the long journey from Galicia the group became quite intimate in spite of the diversity of their backgrounds. Stepun, a prewar volunteer and mobilized lieutenant of the reserves, was of the intelligentsia; his two officer-companions were previously apolitical career captains, to whom the needs of the army and victory over the Germans were paramount, not to say exclusive concerns. Captain Buliubash, an aristocratic progeny of the Corps of Pages and the guards, was presently a confused, disenchanted monarchist who was ready to accept the Revolution if it did not offend his patriotism too much, and he was one of the few of his background to become involved in the maelstrom of political events, chiefly by virtue of a flair for oratory and an easy adaptability to circumstances. Captain Zvezdich was of a different stamp: the type of competent, dedicated battle officer of the line, a *raznochinets*, for whom the Army and the war alone had meaning. He did not attempt to fathom politics or the reasons for events, but approached his mission entirely from the practical viewpoint of restoring the fighting capacity of the Army. His bearing toward the others was correct but humorless and uncommunicative, and his eyes and physiognomy carried the whole weight of the war. Two of the soldiers were workers with a *stazh* (party past), one a Bolshevik and the other a Menshevik,

⁷ Their statement appears in *IzPS*, Apr. 5. See also *VVP*, Mar. 29.

⁸ *Byvshee i nesbyvsheesia*, II, 21-40.

who could easily articulate their respective, rigidly Marxist positions; with respect to the war, however, both were defensists. Makarov, the Bolshevik, was an infantryman and seems to have left a weak, though favorable, impression on Stepun, while Ivanov, a skilled workman in a motorized unit, became a genuine companion and right-hand man to Stepun in his later work as an army *komitetchik* and trouble-shooter. As a genuine proletarian, he could act as an "icebreaker" when the army committee needed to gain entree to a particular unit that had stepped out of line. The other two soldiers, whom Stepun characterizes as colorless, "freshly baked S.R.'s," were a semieducated army clerk and a prosperous peasant who formerly ran a village pub. Neither showed any particular political sophistication or initiative, and both could easily be swayed by any high-sounding oratory or resolution, so long as it had the ring of revolutionary patriotism. Stepun, as a Silver Age intellectual who had passed through the stage of Marxism, established good rapport with the worker-deputies on the basis of a common vocabulary (quite contrived on his part) and thus became the spokesman of the group.

Once in the capital, the chief object of the small deputation was to gain an audience with leading political figures and present their *nakaz*. The confusion in the Tauride Palace had apparently abated little since the first days of the Revolution; they were forced to shoulder their way through the masses of gray coats, workmen's jackets, and intent faces of intellectuals and students, pausing occasionally in the crammed Catherine Hall to listen to improvised speeches to and by other soldier delegations. By heroic efforts they were able to obtain interviews with Guchkov, Kerensky, and Lvov'. Guchkov, already weary and thinking of departure, did not even trouble to appear interested in their importunities; Lvov' greeted them warmly, waxed expansively over the "Great Russian Revolution," but could not be compelled to take their requests seriously ("we're doing all we can on that, but of course one must be patient; it's getting better every day," etc.); Kerensky, by contrast, sensing a sympathetic audience, turned on his full charm and mien of proprietorship, convincing even the skeptical worker-Marxists of his sincerity and businesslike attitude. All three of these figures, of course, had developed thick defense mechanisms against the emotion-charged demands of visiting deputations, so that the interviews probably made little impact. The front was still a stepchild of the metropolitan Revolution.

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The delegation had been specifically instructed to see N. D. Sokolov, the reputed author of Order No. One, to protest its detrimental effect on the front army. Sokolov was cornered by a number of front deputations simultaneously, and, in Stepun's version, was subjected to a considerable drubbing:

Not sensing the mood of the front, and not realizing how his archbourgeois appearance and lawyer's aplomb undercut his authority with the soldiers, he addressed us too much from a civilian standpoint, crudely hammering on the theme of class hatred between the lord high officers and the lowly foot soldiers.⁹

His most tactless mistake, Stepun declares, was to refer to the privilege of the garrison troops not to be sent to the front as a "reward" for their services to the Revolution. Stepun protested vigorously against such a self-serving argument and excoriated Sokolov for deliberately provoking trouble between soldiers and officers when harmonious cooperation was indispensable for defending the front. He categorically rejected the notion that military discipline had anything to do with class divisions, pointing (quite accurately) to the large number of promoted "proletarians" among the *praporshchiki* and career officer-*raznochintsy*. He expounded the theory of surplus value and rent as applied to the economic structure of the Army and found Sokolov's Marxism crudely deficient ("All military men, regardless of rank, sell their labor as a commodity," etc.). Stepun was confident that his arguments had struck home, and he was roundly applauded by his soldier audience. "I knew that the front army sensed as its 'class enemy' not so much the bourgeois or *pomeshchik* as the slackers in the rear," Stepun reflected, "but I realized that I had made use of this resentment with a bit of demagoguery."¹⁰ Afterward, however, Stepun was taken to task by Makarov, who, though having no brief for the "burzhui" Sokolov, insisted that one could not ignore the class character of the struggle between soldiers and officers. The surface solidarity of the front proved already to have fissures, Stepun concluded, which ultimately ranged the Makarovs in the camp of Lenin and the Buliubashes and the Zvezdiches in that of Kornilov.



⁹ Ibid., pp. 36-37.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

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That development, however, lay ahead, whereas the fissure rapidly opening up at the end of March was along a different line. The arrival of the front deputations was a godsend to the Duma-oriented, anti-Soviet political elements. From the very outset of the Revolution they had been intimidated by the obvious veto power that the Soviet exercised over every action of the Provisional Government and even, to a certain extent, over expressions of opinion in the press. For the first two weeks of March the middle-class organs—*Rech'*, *Novoe Vremia*, *Birsheviia Vedomosti*, and *Russkaia Volia*—had joined the chorus of praise to the Revolution and flattered the workers, the soldiers, and the Soviet for helping to accomplish it. *Russkaia Volia* was particularly lavish in commending the workers for their "discipline and awareness of the political significance of the moment" (March 7), and it recognized the Soviet as their legitimate representative organ. Patriotic resolutions of garrison units as well as the defensism of individual Soviet leaders (Gvozdev, Bogdanov) were regarded as healthy signs of political "maturity," which contrasted adversely with the defeatist utterances of the Bolsheviks, who were felt to be an "insignificant minority." Far from appearing alarmed over the new power of the workers, the press generally, and *Russkaia Volia* in particular, praised the Soviet for calling an early end to the general strike (March 6) and for the agreement reached with the Petrograd Association of Manufacturers on the eight-hour day, factory committees, and conciliation courts to settle disputes. The underlying assumption of these congratulatory statements seems to be that the socialists had consented to a *Burgfrieden* in the name of national defense and that certain idiosyncracies in manner of expression should be looked upon tolerantly. Even the Soviet Peace Manifesto, despite its open challenge to Miliukov's foreign policy, evoked only mild criticism at first, commingled with praise for its good sense in recognizing the necessity of a war of defense as long as Wilhelm was on the throne.¹¹

The restrained tone of these reports was not motivated by any real sympathy for the Soviet, but rather by a sense of relative weakness that made a confrontation inadvisable unless some alternative demonstration of "popular" feeling could be generated to put the Soviet leadership on the defensive. Duma and Soviet orators (Rodzianko most frequently for the Duma, Chkheidze or Skobelev for

¹¹ See *Russkaia Volia*, Mar. 14, and *Rech'*, Mar. 15.

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the Soviet) had engaged in a running competition to obtain the most applause for their respective slogans from the endless processions of garrison units through Catherine Hall. The results were indecisive, as the soldiers willingly cheered the oratorical flourishes of both sides.

Several efforts were made in mid-March to outmaneuver or put pressure on the Soviet by mobilizing the garrison troops in a more organized fashion behind militantly patriotic slogans. Although the authors in most cases remain obscure, they seem to have emanated from various unconnected groups of officers and prowar NCOs and soldiers. There was first of all Colonel Pletnev, whose orientation was extreme right-wing and anti-Semitic and who held mass meetings and sent agents into the barracks to inflame the soldiers against the Soviet, even to suggest that it was the creature of German agents. Such an effort was foredoomed to failure. More forthright and conciliatory were young staff officers in the Military Commission, who were anxious to work with the Soviet; other democratically inclined officers followed the example of other urban centers and organized an officers' soviet, which they hoped would become a recognized section of the Petrograd Soviet. Also, a small, ardently defensist group of socialist officers, called the Union of Officer Republicans, worked as a caucus within the Soviet and was even represented on the Executive Committee. These groups, though pro-Soviet, were at the same time committed to a vigorous mobilization of the entire populace behind the war effort.¹²

Certain soldier and NCO groups are even more obscure, but a Sergeant Osminin edited *Soldatskoe Slovo*, an independent organ that sometimes took exception to Soviet policies, particularly when they trespassed on the *edinovlastie* (undivided power) vested in the Provisional Government. Sergeant Kirpichnikov and other heroes of the uprising lent their reputations to promoting the same principles. Many soldiers' meetings in the barracks and outside, which were obviously not under the control of the Soviet leadership, expressed unqualified support of the war and the Provisional Government. A conference of barracks representatives of March 15, obviously not called by the Soviet, passed a resolution of this type, ignoring the recently proclaimed Soviet Peace Manifesto.

¹² Tarasov-Rodionov was a dissident member of the Union of Officer Republicans and provides the only personal account of the organization. See op. cit., pp. 215ff.

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On the same date a similar resolution was passed by an "officers' soviet" that was also attended by delegates from the Baltic Fleet and nearby garrisons.¹³

It was undoubtedly in an attempt to counter such agitation and to distinguish its own position from that of "bourgeois" circles that the Executive Committee issued its Peace Manifesto of March 14. *Izvestiia* carried a series of articles over the next few days that carefully explained the difference between a foreign policy aimed at complete defeat of the Central Powers on the basis of secret treaties with the Allies and a "war of defense" aimed at a negotiated peace with a democratic Germany on the basis of no annexations or indemnities and the self-determination of peoples. The articles repeatedly stressed that "war to full victory" was a bourgeois slogan intended to deceive the masses into continuing the slaughter for the imperialist aims of the ruling classes. To make sure that the idyll of brotherly cooperation between officers and soldiers was not exploited to undermine the allegiance of the latter to the Soviet, several further articles by Steklov raised an alarm over the counterrevolutionary designs of certain commanding officers, including General Alekseev and his cronies at Stavka. Incredible, it declared such officers to be "outside the law," which, given the current mood at the front, sounded very much like an invitation to lynching.¹⁴

As anticipated, these articles put an end to the honeymoon with the bourgeois press and forced defensist officers and soldiers into a more clear-cut choice of loyalties. That a more serious struggle for power had begun became evident in the ensuing days. The dangerous tactics of the adversary came to light at a joint session of the Soldiers' Section and the ephemeral "officers' soviet" on the fourteenth, which was apparently called as a trial for a merger. On the agenda was the Declaration of Soldiers' Rights, which had already been approved in principle by the Soldiers Section, but which required touching up on the delicate question of soldier-officer relations. Insofar as one can judge from the very confused record, the proceedings quickly degenerated into an orgy of typical

¹³ See *IzPS*, Mar. 17, and *SS*, Mar. 16.

¹⁴ The issue of March 14 carried three articles entitled, respectively, "Stavka, the Center of Counterrevolution," "General-Reactionaries," and "Rebel Generals are Outside the Law." The first article was based on a denunciation by the Cavaliers of St. George, who after their return to Stavka from the Ivanov expedition overheard what they held to be monarchist utterances by certain generals.

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March speech making in which wildly patriotic utterances clearly drowned out those that sought to clarify the Soviet position. Ignoring fine distinctions, an impulsive soldier rose and exclaimed, "So who's fighting for conquests? We're fighting for Mother Russia. Hurrah for Great Russia!" which set off wild cheering and applause. A Soviet supporter railed against "internal foes," meaning counterrevolutionaries and *burzhuis*, but another soldier-orator played upon the same phrase, interpreting it as applying to defeatists and German agents, probably meaning Bolsheviks. A general who gave a long discourse on the meaning of military discipline, even in a revolutionary army, was roundly applauded, as was a sailor from Reval who boasted that in their soviet the officers and soldiers worked together in perfect harmony. Another soldier-orator, completely carried away with his own eloquence on behalf of the fraternity of soldiers and officers, concluded by embracing and kissing the handiest officer; both burst into sobs, as did the entire assembly, which in a state of transport passed a resolution swearing "eternal union between soldiers and officers, to which we summon the entire Army on the basis of mutual esteem."¹⁵ Though newspaper accounts represent the outcome as completely spontaneous, it seems likely that a group of prowar loyalists had determined ahead of time to wrest control of the meeting from the Soviet-oriented leadership, which at this session probably consisted of anonymous third-stringers.

Two days later the Soviet forces worked their revenge. At a garrison meeting Colonel Engelgardt and other orators called for an end to dual power and for the Soviet to concern itself only with the working class, and they introduced a resolution to this effect. Thereupon a Soviet leader mounted the tribune and offered a substitute resolution, subsequently passed, that endorsed the Provisional Government only insofar as it carried out its existing agreements with the Soviet and supported the principles of the Soviet Peace Manifesto, including an immediate peace conference of the democratic forces of all belligerent nations.¹⁶ These episodes testify to the unstable mood of the garrison at this point and to the new determination of the prowar groups to undercut Soviet support. The cards, however, were still stacked in favor of the Soviet,

¹⁵ SS, Mar. 17. The session is not recorded in *IzPS* or in the published proceedings of the Soldiers' Section, so one may assume that it was an improvised affair that got out of hand.

¹⁶ *IzPS*, Mar. 19.

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as the outcome of the latter episode reveals, and the prowar groups were still looking for the right sort of leverage with which to pry the soldier masses away from Soviet leadership.

The Soviet was on the defensive on two other fronts as well in the third week of March. First, delegations arriving from other major metropolitan centers made known that their arrangements with political authorities and the military were quite different and more harmonious: officers were well represented in the soviet structure, command authority was explicitly endorsed, soldiers' interests did not play back seat to those of workers, and their soviets took active part in committees of social organizations, which wielded local power, often even supplying the leadership. The expediency of military discipline, the dignity of the officers' calling, the primacy of the needs of the war, the importance of cooperation with bourgeois groups, and the danger of divided authority were frequently and explicitly recognized.¹⁷

On the fourteenth a delegate from Pskov protested to the Executive Committee over the right of Petrograd soldiers not to be sent to the front, and inquired with apparent misgivings as to who was the real power, the Soviet or the Provisional Government.¹⁸ On the seventeenth a representative of the United Soldiers' and Officers' Soviet of Kiev addressed a full session of the Petrograd Soviet:

In Russia there is only one party—that of the Great Russian people and the Provisional Committee [*sic*]. Our Allies have confidence in the Russian people, and therefore we must keep our treaties. Talk of peace is only appropriate after the German monarchy is overthrown. We have to forget party squabbles in the interests of victory. Civilians should not interfere in military affairs [noise in the hall]. Your orders have caused misunderstandings. . . .

The orator was removed from the podium by force at this point, and he was by no means the only casualty among provincial and front delegates who spoke a language unaccustomed in Petrograd.¹⁹

¹⁷ The metropolitan press published resolutions of this sort from garrisons in Tsarskoe Selo, Pskov, Vitebsk, Kiev, Sevastopol, Luga, and elsewhere.

¹⁸ See PSPZ, p. 48.

¹⁹ F. P. Matveev, *Iz zapisnoi knigi deputata 176 pekhotnogo polka* (Moscow, 1932), p. 45. This is the only unofficial verbatim record of the sessions.

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The second source of pressure stemmed from the widespread continuation of industrial unrest, in spite of the Soviet's injunction to return to work and the signed agreement with the Petrograd industrialists (March 5 and 10, respectively). Individual factory committees refused to make use of the arbitration machinery, removed numerous administrative personnel by force, and interfered in the technical side of production. Soviet instructions to abide by the agreement and exercise restraint were ignored. For about a week Soviet personnel, sensitive to the charge of bad faith, were engaged in trying to cope with the situation, but it is clear that their efforts were only partially rewarded. The workers were in no mood to surrender their de facto control of the factories and to rely on the Soviet's prestige alone to secure economic gains. Bogdanov, in a report to the Soviet on behalf of the Executive Committee on the eighteenth, noted that unrest was seriously affecting production and that the enemies of the working class were exploiting the situation to discredit the Soviet.²⁰ Reports from individual factories revealed that a quick solution was not likely; the workers were determined to make good the losses they had suffered from inflation and not to accept a diminution in income because of the eight-hour day or slowdowns in production. In many cases work stoppages were caused by shortages in fuel and raw materials or by the claim that such was the case (a convenient pretext, of course, for retaliatory lockouts). Even when newly elected factory committees decided to return to work, wildcat strikes continued in key divisions. The forced expulsion of technical and supervisory personnel continued unabated, and the decisions of arbitration panels were systematically ignored. In desperation the Executive Committee issued a special proclamation on March 21, calling on the workers to maintain order and live up to the agreements, but again the appeal fell on deaf ears.²¹ *Rabochaia Gazeta*, a Menshevik organ, was the most persistent voice calling for the resumption of work, arguing that isolated actions could have no enduring results and would only demonstrate to the bourgeoisie the workers' lack of unity and the weakness of the authority of the Soviet. It even urged caution in immediately realizing the eight-hour day, as it would be unwise to launch the "second revolution" before the first was complete.²²

²⁰ See *Rabochaia Gazeta*, Mar. 21, and Matveev, pp. 51-52.

²¹ See *Rech'*, Mar. 22.

²² Until Mar. 22 *Pravda* was following much the same line as *Rabochaia*

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It was at this juncture that the front delegations began to arrive. Already primed to "straighten out the rear," they were amazed at the discussions they heard in the Soviet. At one session a soldier-orator exclaimed:

Comrade workers! Among the soldiers antipathy to the workers has cropped up. You can't stop work now. . . . Our job is to arm ourselves against the enemy. Save the struggle with capital until after the war. If you don't get back to your benches, it will go badly with you. For shame! We must show patriotism. I call on you to return to work!

At another, in reply to soldier-orators, a Putilov worker explained: "We won't forget the front. We are working hard to turn out shells. But there's no coal, and only enough oil and raw materials for four days. The old government left us in a mess, which has to be taken into account."²³ Whether this plea was accurate is difficult to say, but it clearly reveals that the workers were now obliged to justify themselves to their soldier comrades.

The moment seemed opportune for the nonsocialist press to launch an offensive. The former restrained tone was discarded as the soldiers' demands were seized upon, embellished, and made to appear the sentiment of all patriotic Russians, in contrast to the narrow political dogmatism of the Soviet, which was now portrayed as a "private organization" interfering in the legitimate domain of the Provisional Government and dividing the country into parties. The earliest and shrillest voice was that of *Russkaia Volia*, the former organ of Protopopov. A sudden convert to republicanism, it affected a quasi-populist stance between the liberals and the socialists for the announced intent of bringing the parties together. Its device was "War to Full Victory!" which, along with such other tribunes as *Rech'* and *Novoe Vremia*, it understood to include the sacred treaties with the Allies and Constantinople. The Soviet Peace Manifesto, after its revisionist implications were clearly spelled out in *Izvestiia*, caused the patriotic press great offense, and beginning with the issue of March 21, *Russkaia Volia's* patronizing tone suddenly gave way to a vicious attack. For the first time Order No. One was discussed openly and characterized

Gazeta. See "Anarchiia i organizatsiia," "Vopros vozniknoveniia raboty," and "Prizyv k samodiziplinu i rabote" in *Pravda*, Mar. 19, 11, and 22, respectively.

²³ Matveev, pp. 53, 56.

as a "mortal blow to the Army"; Soviet leaders' anonymity and use of pseudonyms were played upon to arouse suspicions as to who was in control (spies possibly?); and finally, the Soviet was taunted to demonstrate its revolutionary authority by getting the workers back to their benches. An editorial caustically observed that misguided idealists could cause just as much disorganization in production as a coterie of Sukhomlinovs and Miasoedovs, insinuating that refusal to join the bandwagon of the victory campaign was tantamount to treason. On March 25 the Stokhod defeat was treated as the German workers' answer to the Soviet Peace Manifesto and taken as a warning that it was time for the country to get down to work and to cease talking hypothetically of peace terms, which were relegated to the constituent assembly and the binding treaties with the Allies.

In the last days of March the campaign reached its height, as each issue of *Russkaia Volia* carried long appeals to the country on the theme of *la patire en danger* by such talented littérateurs as Amfiteatrov, Nemirovich-Danchenko, and Leonid Andreev, while across the top of the two internal pages was emblazoned "SOLDIERS TO THE TRENCHES, WORKERS TO THEIR BENCHES." Below were such items as a detailed report on the impasse in the factories by the Society of Petrograd Engineers, side-by-side with front resolutions expressing alarm over divided authority and the slackening of war production. *Rabochaia Gazeta* was cited extensively to "prove" its case, and the Soviet was repeatedly ridiculed for not being able to put an end to the anarchy. With the announcement of the Provisional Government's statement on war aims of March 27, which under Soviet pressure and in circuitous language renounced territorial gains and compensations, *Russkaia Volia* accused the Soviet of gross interference in the government's province and of introducing "terrible confusion in the minds of the popular masses." For the first time it openly condemned dual authority and called for the restoration of undivided authority, even suggesting the entry of authoritative socialist figures (defensists, of course) into the cabinet.

Rech', *Birzheviia Vedomosti*, and *Novoe Vremia* struck much the same themes during this period, but allowed the lesson to sink in by juxtaposing the factory reports with resolutions from the front and other relevant items rather than by featuring strident editorial attacks. Nevertheless, they also carried long articles on the Stokhod defeat and blamed it on chaos in the rear, and par-

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ticularly on the inactivity of the factories. "It is time to get back to work!" *Rech'* admonished. "There is no more time for celebrations when on the field of battle our brothers and fathers are dying by the thousands, and with their dying breath plead to us for shells and machine guns." It concluded its discourse by picking up the refrain "Soldiers to the trenches, workers to their benches!"²⁴



During this emerging crisis the Soviet leadership seemed oblivious to the danger posed by their differences with the provincial garrisons and the front. Unless the system of dual power could be extended to include the rest of the country and the front the Soviet's position vis-à-vis the Provisional Government could not be maintained. For this it was essential to regularize its relationship with the soldiers' committees and garrison soviets as soon as possible in order to secure understanding and support of its viewpoint. Dangerous cleavages were in the making between front and rear, between soldiers and workers, and between provinces and metropolis. The bourgeois groups seemed to be alert to the opportunities of the situation, whereas the Soviet leadership was not. It was, of course, not unaware of the press campaign, as in a sense it had deliberately provoked such a response with the proclamation of the Peace Manifesto, and it was undoubtedly gratified that the bourgeoisie thus advertised the imperialist character of its victory slogans. But the Soviet leadership tended to regard the naively militant defensism of provincial and front delegates with condescension, and it was not until the press campaign was visibly exercising an influence over the arriving front delegates that serious countermeasures were undertaken.

Perhaps what shook the leaders out of their complacency was a confrontation between front delegates and a group of workers at the Tauride Palace around the twenty-seventh. Apparently some heated interchanges took place, and Gvozdev was summoned as a representative of the Executive Committee to offer explanations. One delegate demanded: "How can you supply the army with enough shells if you don't increase the number of workers and hold to the eight-hour day, especially if you don't want to put in overtime?" A guards grenadier angrily declared that 6,500 box cars were standing empty in the freight yards and decried the continuing celebration of the Revolution when there was work to be done.

²⁴ *Rech'*, Mar. 25.

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Gvozdev was hard put to give satisfactory explanations, but he patiently described the problem and the Soviet efforts; he attributed the current difficulties primarily to the absence of fuel and materials and not to the unwillingness of the workers to produce. A resolution adopted by the assembled delegates shows that they were to a certain extent mollified, but nevertheless determined to press their point:

The assembly of deputies from the front and workers from rear institutions call upon the comrade workers, in view of the increased onset of the enemy, to make the utmost effort without putting limits on overtime in industries working on defense. At the same time, the assembly insists that the workers be supplied with food and the factories with raw materials and fuel.²⁵

Over the next few days the pressure continued to mount as the number of front deputations and the intensity of their demands reached a peak. On the twenty-eighth the massive delegation from the First Army arrived and immediately set out on a tour of Petrograd factories: A meeting of eighty-nine garrison and front units took place on the twenty-ninth, at which a three-point resolution addressed to the workers was passed, demanding that they: (1) cease immediately all discord among themselves and with administrative and technical personnel and concentrate on production; (2) submit all issues to the conciliation commissions and accept the Soviet as the highest source of appeal; and (3) postpone realization of the eight-hour day until after the war.²⁶ On that same date there was an abrupt new note in the editorial policy of *Izvestiia*, which was picked up the following day by all other socialist organs, to the effect that the bourgeoisie was conspiring to drive a wedge between the soldiers and the workers by a campaign of lies and slander in the press, blaming the workers for holding up production. The change was all the more dramatic because only a day or so previously most of these organs, including *Pravda*, were still pleading with the workers to return to work and to respond to the authority of the Soviet.²⁷

What triggered this abrupt shift is unclear, but it undoubtedly reflects discussion within the Soviet leadership and general agree-

²⁵ *IzPS*, Mar. 30, and *SS*, Mar. 29. ²⁶ *Rabochaia Gazeta*, Mar. 29.

²⁷ Articles of the same tenor appeared on the same date in the S.R. organs *Delo Naroda* and *Zemlia i Volia*.

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ment that a countercampaign was vitally needed to prevent the defection of the front soldiers. A strong indication of this is that at the first session of the All-Russian Conference of Soviets, which opened on the twenty-ninth, Tsereteli concluded a long speech on the question of war and peace by denouncing the "despicable slander" that the workers were not supporting the Army at the front. The theme was picked up by one of the staunch defensists on the Executive Committee, the Bundist M. I. Lieber, who elaborated on the iniquity of the bourgeois press campaign, charging that these groups, with Miliukov at their head, wished to continue the imperialist foreign policy of tsarism unchanged and were in a state of frustrated rage over the endorsement of the Soviet formula by the government statement of the twenty-seventh. They hoped to drown the consciousness of the distinction in the popular mind by unleashing an orgy of mindless chauvinism and making the workers the deliberate scapegoats of the soldiers' understandable anxieties. Lieber then enunciated what was to become the pivotal argument of the Soviet majority in favor of "revolutionary defensism," namely, that the Soviet peace policy could only succeed if the Russian Army was formidable enough to pose a real threat to the as yet imperialist armies of the Central Powers, which occupied not only Russian soil but also Poland and parts of the Baltic countries and Rumania. The workers and soldiers, therefore, were called upon to work hand in hand and to do everything in their power to enhance the fighting capacity of the Army, even if this meant preparation for offensive as well as defensive operations.²⁸

A fair number of front soldiers attended the All-Russian Conference of Soviets, though there was by no means regular representation; most of the mandates seem to have been given at the last minute to those deputations that happened to be in Petrograd.²⁹ The front delegates who occasionally spoke up during the proceedings sounded out of tune with the otherwise politically informed intellectuals. By and large they were listeners rather than

²⁸ See *Vserossiiskoe soveshchanie sovetov: 1917 g. v dokumentakh i materialakh*, ed. M. N. Pokrovskii and Ia. A. Iakovlev (Moscow and Lenin-grad, 1928), pp. 51-54.

²⁹ The mandate commission registered that 7 of the 14 armies were represented, plus 26 units of lesser size; armies were entitled to 4 delegates, corps and divisions to 2, and regiments to 1. Thus 60 or so front delegates seems a reasonable estimate. Only the Twelfth Army seems to have come prepared in advance. See *ibid.*, pp. 28, 183-84, 187.

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participants, and only the Twelfth Army delegation seemed conversant with the issues on the agenda (the two chief delegates, Kuchin and Romm, were educated Mensheviks with close political ties to Tsereteli). When as a substitute to Tsereteli's main resolution a delegate of the Special Army, in the name of his comrades "one million strong," offered a proposal calling for "war to full victory," it was howled down as a "Kadet resolution."³⁰ Clearly, the Executive Committee was in full control of the proceedings, and the debate was carried almost exclusively by its own members while provincial and front delegates scarcely raised their voices. However, the few recorded comments by front soldiers indicate that they had been considerably impressed by the proceedings and had absorbed much of the logic of the Soviet position. Thus a certain Akimov declared:

You want to hear the voice of the Army, the Army that has sat in the trenches for thirty-three months and borne inhuman suffering? That Army cries we don't need annexations or contributions . . . but still louder it cries "as long as the German refuses to take the outstretched hand in brotherhood, as long as he doesn't go back to his *Vaterland*, we will defend our honor and our precious freedom with all our strength!"³¹

Conversely, the Soviet leadership was now better informed of the mood of the front delegates and assumed a more positive posture of revolutionary defense. Tsereteli had already budgeted an Executive Committee dominated by nonparty Internationalists (Sukhanov, Steklov, Sokolov) to endorse a war of defense until the German proletariat responded to the Soviet's appeal. But during the debate he also accepted into his main motion an amendment suggested by several army delegates, which stressed that the Army should be prepared for active operations and appealed to workers in defense-related industries to make every effort to supply the needs of the Army.³² Tsereteli records in his memoirs that between sessions the front delegates requested a special meeting with him and declared that unless the front received a clear statement that the Army must be prepared to fight, the soldiers would

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 61-62. This delegation was handpicked by Gurko's staff prior to the Special Army Congress of March 27-30, which took a strong pro-Soviet stand on the peace formula of "no annexations and indemnities." See above, p. 283.

³¹ Ibid., p. 79.

³² Ibid., p. 292.

not see the logic of maintaining discipline, and that dangerous symptoms of disintegration had already set in. In effect, the front delegates were conceding that they were in a far more defensist frame of mind than their constituents and that one of their chief objectives was the restoration of command authority and military discipline.³³ The ardent defensism of the front delegates rested on a more fragile foundation than they cared to admit, forecasting the problems that were to arise in the next phase of the Revolution. Nevertheless, the chief immediate result was that the front delegates had been exposed to a thorough discussion of the distinctions between the Soviet and "bourgeois" peace positions, and that they now accepted the former's without qualification.

Once alerted, the workers of Petrograd reacted even more vigorously to the crisis than did the Executive Committee and undertook to ease the minds of the visiting front delegations. Vladimir Woytinsky, a former Bolshevik turned defensist and general trouble-shooter for the Executive Committee thus described a typical worker-soldier confrontation:

A crowd of soldiers would invade a munitions factory at night to check on the work of the night shift. . . . I would drive to the factory, usually about three o'clock in the morning. All work would have been suspended; the workers would be assembled in the court, nervous and angry, facing grim, suspicious, and often arrogant soldiers. There was no way of finding out what kind of delegates they were. They looked like men from the trenches, but usually they had no credentials.³⁴

It took only a few days of such incidents for the workers to be persuaded that they had to remove all grounds for the delegates' suspicions that they were responsible for the bottlenecks in production. The wildcat strikes quickly came to an end, and resolutions from various factories began to appear in the socialist press denouncing the bourgeois press and appealing to the soldiers not to allow themselves to be misled. A resolution of the factory committee of elders of the Aivaz Zavod of March 29 is typical:

Comrade soldiers! Rumors have reached us that certain people are spreading the slander that the workers are only

³³ See I. G. Tsereteli, *Vospominaniia o fevral'skoi revoliutsii*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1963), II, 13-14.

³⁴ *Stormy Passage* (New York, 1961), p. 260.

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concerned about themselves and are striking to get higher wages without regard to [how it affects] the production of shells. . . .

Comrades, the enemies of democracy are sowing discord among us because they are frightened by the combined strength of workers and soldiers under the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Tell all those slanderers that you who have entered the barracks from the ranks of workbench and hammer, you, as conscious soldiers to the last man, have confirmed that the workers are bending every effort to get defense work operating at full speed. Following the instructions of the Soviet, all our demands to the capitalists, who have become fat on war profits, we have turned over to factory committees of elders and have not taken one minute off from work. At our factory are 5,000 men and all are on the job. We workers don't know a single factory in Petrograd that is on strike at the present time.

Soldiers, don't believe evil rumors, but let your own deputies see for themselves how work is proceeding, and put a stop to those who are sowing discord on the streets and dividing people in order to continue to rule over them.³⁵

The common theme of all these resolutions was the charge of slander by the bourgeois press and the appeal to the soldiers not to allow the common enemy to drive a wedge between themselves and the workers. A number of factories followed the lead of ten thousand workers of the Putilov Works, who at a mass meeting on March 31 declared a boycott of *Russkaia Volia*, *Novoe Vremia*, *Rech'*, *Birzheviia Vedomosti*, and several fellow-traveling penny dailies; a list of certified socialist papers was appropriately appended.³⁶

In a parallel effort, a number of diplomatic, fence-mending initiatives were undertaken. A special leaflet addressed to soldiers announced that at a meeting on the twenty-eighth, representatives of twelve artillery factories had determined that the only factories not working were those suffering shortages of materials. They suggested regular joint worker-soldier teams to visit factories and investigate rumors.³⁷ A group of metal workers announced its decision to work on Good Friday and devote the earnings to gifts for

³⁵ *Pravda*, Mar. 29, reprinted in *VOSR. Sverzhenie*, p. 562.

³⁶ *VOSR. Sverzhenie*, p. 580.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 582.

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soldiers at the front, and it invited other Petrograd factories to follow this example.³⁸ On the same day, a proclamation by the Agitational Commission of the Soviet urged Petrograd workers to send gifts to the front for May Day, the international holiday of the workers.³⁹

Soldiers' groups from the capital also became involved in the counteroffensive. The reserve battalion of the Second Guards Rifle Regiment in Tsarskoe Selo, which had hitherto issued statements critical of the Soviet, sent a deputation to Petrograd factories to verify the press rumors and found them to be "purest fantasy and of a manifestly inflammatory character."⁴⁰ From the front the Izmailovskii Guards Regiment sent a request that its reserve battalion inspect all major munitions plants, in response to which the latter placed in *Izvestiia* precise figures that demonstrated that full production had been resumed.⁴¹ The Union of Officer Republicans also defended the workers in a special proclamation and urged the Military Commission of the Duma to send an investigative team to factories in Kronshtadt, which had been the object of particular press criticism; such a team was sent and soon issued a report that all factories there were in operation and that the defenses of the capital were in perfect order.⁴² A number of garrison units, including the Grenadier and Finlandskii Guards reserve battalions, passed resolutions of solidarity with the workers and condemnation of the bourgeois press.⁴³

As a result of these inspections, a number of front deputations declared themselves satisfied and transmitted this to their units. The First Army deputation not only issued a glowing account of humming factories and holy oaths by the workers to speed shells to the front, but also denounced those officers who continued to defame the workers. A copy of their report was sent to General Brusilov with a request to remove a certain General Bulatov, who had reportedly blamed the shortage of tobacco and clothing on the workers.⁴⁴ General Biskupskii, who headed the Sixth Army delegation from the Rumanian Front, reported personally to Guchkov that "the current rumors portray the situation as much worse than it is in reality."⁴⁵ Before long the same themes were picked up at the front itself, and then flowed back to the capital in the

³⁸ *IzPS*, Mar. 29.

⁴⁰ *VOSR. Sverzhenie*, pp. 648-49.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Apr. 2 and Mar. 31.

⁴⁴ *IzPS*, Apr. 5 and 7.

³⁹ *Pravda*, Mar. 30.

⁴¹ *IzPS*, Mar. 30.

⁴³ *VOSR. Sverzhenie*, pp. 654, 656.

⁴⁵ *VVP*, Apr. 6.

form of similarly worded resolutions.⁴⁶ A resolution of the Second Ammunition Park of the First Caucasus Artillery Division of March 30 was addressed to artillery factories in the capital, which had been criticized in earlier statements, and declared that the soldiers were "fully satisfied" by the statement of the Izmailovtsy. The campaign in the bourgeois press was linked with the greed of capitalists for war profits, and the slander against front soldiers for the Stokhod defeat was seen to have its source in Miliukov's imperialist insistence on the acquisition of Constantinople. Moreover, the resolution of the Second Ammunition Park was the first of many from the front to express confidence in the Soviet as the sole representative of the interests of workers and peasants, and to qualify support of the Provisional Government with the famous phrase of Order No. One, "insofar as" (it adhered to the prescriptions of the Soviet). In other words, the most serious consequence of this episode was to make the front acutely conscious of the distinctive positions of the Soviet and the bourgeois parties, and to sow suspicions that the Provisional Government was irrevocably linked to bourgeois interests and therefore required strict control by the Soviet.

In the metropolitan press this issue died down as quickly as it had arisen. *Russkaia Volia*, realizing that it had stirred up a hornet's nest, declared a truce in its April 1 issue and changed its device to "The Workers are at Their Benches, Long Live Victory!" It even complimented the All-Russian Conference of Soviets for its resolution on war and peace because it recognized that "as long as the war continues, all efforts must be made to maintain the fighting capacity of the Army." *Rech'* acknowledged on March 31 that production was getting back to normal, and with a brief objection to the excesses of the Soviet countercampaign, dropped the issue. The patriotic forces, however, suffered a major blow in the loss of one of its most effective spokesmen in this controversy. Heretofore a loyal supporter of "undivided authority" and "war to full victory," Sergeant Osminin's *Soldatskoe Slovo* suddenly turned on the "bourgeois press" and championed the Soviet as the legitimate defender of the workers. "The reason for the present situation is quite clear," Osminin averred, "as many of our *burzhuis* of the Nicolaevan stamp continue to think of factory

⁴⁶ For resolutions of the XL Corps and the Second Ammunition Park of the First Caucasus Artillery Division, see *IzPS*, Apr. 11 and 8; other examples are in *VOSR: Sverzhenie*, pp. 485, 490.

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workers as their private milk cow.”⁴⁷ This defection broke the facade of the solidarity of “all classes of society,” including the “healthy voice of the soldier.” In the socialist press other issues soon crowded out this one, but *Pravda* kept hammering away at theme for the rest of April, featuring a special column on “The Unity of Soldiers and Workers” and building up considerable capital for future use.



Even though this episode of the Revolution was momentary and soon forgotten, it contributed considerably to the shaping of competing forces in 1917 and the hardening of class attitudes, making any reconciliation in the name of national goals unlikely. The workers had received one more dramatic proof of the fundamental hostility of the bourgeois world and did not fail to notice that the Bolsheviks articulated their antagonism far more uncompromisingly than did the Mensheviks and the Soviet leadership. The garrison soldiers, even the least sophisticated of them, realized instinctively that a major effort had been made to overturn their privileged position in the revolutionary settlement and that the consequence would be the revocation of their right to remain in Petrograd. Moreover, the bourgeois press, unable to gain advantage out of the worker question, played increasingly on the front's demands for reinforcements and thus put pressure on the garrison soldiers. It was obvious to the latter that their best defense was to maintain firm solidarity with the workers and to focus attention on the “slander” of the bourgeois press against the two chief forces that had carried through the Revolution. The Soviet was soon to relent on this issue—the decision to resume marching companies was made by the Executive Committee on April 16—allowing the Bolsheviks to reap the harvest on this issue as well. The Soviet, for its part, realized more acutely than before the necessity to be on its guard to prevent progovernment parties from making inroads into its constituency. The clear definition of its peace policy, the forcing of its own formula on the government over the objections of Miliukov, the extension of its representational nexus nationwide in the All-Russian Conference, and the defeat of the patriotic press campaign all served to solidify its position.

For the present study, the most significant outcome was the

⁴⁷ *SS*, Apr. 12.

marked shift in political consciousness of the front representatives from naive defensism and suspicion of the Soviet to a firm commitment to the latter's position on all major issues, including war and peace, and their unequivocal endorsement of the Soviet's right to exercise control over the actions of the Provisional Government. While it is true that this was a logical and inevitable shift, given the parallel between soldiers' committees and soviets and the social elements they represented, the process may have taken much longer and may never have taken the form of such a definite commitment had the delegations not themselves witnessed the concerted efforts of senior officers and the capital press to trick them into becoming enemies of the workers and supporting imperialist war aims. The Revolution thus acquired a more precise content than the vague "freedom" of the early days; indeed, it now took on a marked social character, as the Provisional Government became tainted with a "class" rather than a national character, and thus required strict regulation and control by the true organ of the "democratic masses," the Soviet. And this shift in political consciousness could not but affect the way the soldiers perceived the war, their officers, military discipline, and even the enemy.

One should differentiate, of course, between the level of sophistication of the educated, socialist-tinged "committee class" of the upper levels and the soldier-peasants and soldier-workers elected by their fellows to the company and regimental committees. The new political consciousness was most clear-cut and "revolutionary defensist" at the upper levels, but, as he had in the early weeks of the revolution, the simple soldier absorbed the new consciousness in his own fashion through newspapers and reports of his representatives to the capital. That there was in the capital a hostile bourgeois world that sought to snatch away the gains of the Revolution and that advocated the continuation of the war to "full victory" for aims of its own did not particularly surprise him; however, it was disappointing to learn that such elements dominated even the Provisional Government. Thus the notion that the Soviet exercised strict control and was directly responsive to the wishes of the masses greatly reassured him and became indelibly implanted in his mind.



Much of the evidence that would bear out the above is of the same fragmentary nature that plagues the investigation of other

important developments. The shift in consciousness of the soldier masses was most clearly evident in their spontaneous behavior, which will be discussed in the following chapter. For the present, the task at hand is to trace the reorientation of the upper levels of the committee structure from tutelage by the Army command toward Soviet positions on all major issues and toward a view of themselves as a legitimate component of the democratic representational system. The most vivid demonstration of this process was the spate of army and front congresses in April, which, in contrast to those of March (First and Fifth armies), endorsed without qualification the resolutions of the All-Russian Conference of Soviets on the war and other questions and pledged to uphold the Provisional Government only "insofar as" it carried out its agreed-upon obligations, including the renunciation of conquests as promised in its proclamation of March 27 (which was taken to be an unqualified acceptance of the Soviet position).

Politically, the most significant of these was the grandiose Congress of the Western Front in Minsk of April 7-17. It seems to have been jointly initiated by the Officers' Soviet and the Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet of Minsk, both of which were vying for influence over the soldier mass and hoped to augment their forces by extending their base to the front. On March 23 the Minsk Soviet chairman, Pozern (a Mezhraionets, later a Bolshevik), wired a request to the Petrograd Soviet to send "at least five responsible figures of appropriate stature," preferably the chairman or deputy chairman, to address the proposed congress. Doubtless the Officers' Soviet did the same, as an impressive roster of Petrograd political figures attended, including Tsereteli, Chkheidze, and Skobelev for the Soviet, and Rodzianko, Rodichev, Maklakov, and Maslennikov for the Duma (but no government figures).⁴⁸ All military units front and rear were to be represented, soldiers on the basis of one per regiment (elected by regimental committees), and officers, one per division; the ratio of four soldiers to one officer was maintained for all types of units according to an adjusted formula. In addition, eighteen local worker-soldier soviets were given mandates; of the 850 official delegates, only 128, or 15 percent of the total

⁴⁸ See *VOSRB*, I, 140. This work includes the best collection of documents on the congress, among them the full text of the resolutions passed (pp. 194ff.), but not the *protokoly*. The latter, which were published in 1917, were not available to the author. However, extensive reports on the congress appeared in the press, most fully in *Den'* from April 9 to 17.

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(59 soldiers, 14 officers, and 55 workers) represented local soviets.⁴⁹ The formula was designed to give overwhelming preponderance to the front representatives, since both sponsoring parties hoped thus to strengthen their respective positions. The Minsk organizers had a built-in advantage, which they tried to translate into domination of the presidium elected by the congress, but the front soldiers angrily protested. One of their number, a certain Sorokoletov, marched to the podium, rifle in hand, and advanced his own candidacy, proclaiming: "Yesterday I still sat in the trenches . . . today I fulfill my duty as a citizen. I am an S.R."⁵⁰ The maneuver obliged Chairman Pozern, a civilian, to identify himself as a Social Democrat and forced a change in the presidium to give greater weight to the front soldiers. Pozern was confirmed as chairman, but Sorokoletov was made vice-chairman.

This minor crisis weathered, the congress otherwise gave itself over to the March mood of harmony, speech making, and militant defensism. The soldier delegates called for more shells and more support from the rear and enthusiastically applauded the patriotic speeches of the Duma figures and of their commander, General Gurko. But once these decorative speeches were over, the Soviet representatives dominated the congress. The uprising, the genesis of Order No. One, the campaign of slander against the workers, the government endorsement of the Soviet peace formula—all were recounted in full detail while the delegates listened in rapt attention. Skobelev tactlessly entertained the soldier audience with anecdotes about how officers had gone undercover during the decisive moments of the Petrograd uprising, evoking howls of protest from the officer-delegates. The next day he made amends, paying tribute to the heroism of officer comrades in the trenches and exchanging embraces and handshakes with several who mounted the tribune.⁵¹

Tsereteli gave an extensive report on the Soviet peace policy, a reprise of his performance at the All-Russian Soviet Conference, and deftly fielded a series of hostile questions in a session that

⁴⁹ *VOSRB*, I, 170-76, and V. I. Miller, *Soldatskie komitety*, p. 293. Also present, but without voting privileges, were 350 alternates, 100 "guests," and another 100 representatives of the sponsoring organizations, the Minsk Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet and the Minsk Officers' Soviet.

⁵⁰ *Den'*, Apr. 9.

⁵¹ Tsereteli, I, 79. See also Gurko's account, which stresses his own influence and that of the Duma figures and characterizes Tsereteli and the Soviet figures as "moderates." *Memories*, pp. 284-90.

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lasted until 2:00 A.M. One interrogator wanted to know "why England and France should bow down before the wishes of an insignificant handful of Russian workers and soldiers?" Tsereteli easily won the applause of his audience with the observation that the assembled representatives of Russian democracy were hardly an insignificant handful.⁵² Tsereteli was careful to stress, as he had at the All-Russian Conference, that the Soviet peace policy presupposed a powerful "democratic army" capable of active as well as passive defense. In a tense moment, a questioner vented one of the genuine anxieties of the men in the trenches: if they did receive an order to take the offensive, how would they know that it in fact proceeded from the government and was approved by the democratic forces? Tsereteli mustered all his eloquence to reassure his audience that the government and the command were subject to the immediate and constant control of the Soviet and that any such orders would necessarily reflect the will of the people, thus taking out a large mortgage for the future. But it answered to the now firmly defensist, ardently pro-Soviet mood of the soldier-delegates and brought a final ovation.⁵³

Long sessions were devoted to resolutions, closely modeled on those of the All-Russian Conference, on social and political questions—on war and peace, relations between the Soviet and the Provisional Government, the agrarian question, the eight-hour day, and finally, "the slanderous accusations against the working class," which were aimed at "sowing discord between the revolutionary army and the revolutionary proletariat."⁵⁴ A lonely voice, probably that of an officer, attacked the "interference" of the Soviet in the affairs of the government but was howled down, a measure of how far sentiment had shifted since mid-March. The most interesting deviation from the prototype resolutions of the All-Russian Conference of Soviets was on the land question. Although one S.R.-inspired amendment favoring "socialization of the land" was voted down after staunch opposition by Social Democratic orators, another stating that "land must not be bought or sold, but handed over to the use of those who work it according to an amount not exceeding a labor norm" was easily passed, despite the latter's

⁵² *Rechi I. G. Tsereteli* (Petrograd, 1917), p. 41. This rare work was made available to the author by A. M. Bourgina, executrix of Tsereteli's papers and Curator of the B. I. Nicolaevsky Collection at the Hoover Institution on War, Peace, and Revolution.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50, and *Vospominaniia*, I, 81-82.

⁵⁴ *VOSRB*, I, 201-2.

objections.⁵⁵ An amendment calling for the integration of peasant soviets into the representational structure was likewise carried. Most of the resolutions were passed by overwhelming majorities, 600 votes for, 6-8 against and 35-40 abstentions being the most typical. The latter undoubtedly represented the unreconciled staff officer and Zemgor element; most front officers of the lower ranks apparently went with the majority.⁵⁶

The congress was a milestone in terms of solidifying the political physiognomy of the front committees: democratically elected representatives of every regiment and type of unit from front and rear had expressed firm loyalty to the Soviet, which was now clearly perceived to be the guardian of democratic liberties and the champion of specific social goals, above all, the transfer of all the land to the toiling peasants. Conversely, the bourgeoisie was branded as a hostile force that had inspired a scurrilous press campaign against the workers and, under the cover of the slogan of "full victory," threatened to drag out the war for its own selfish aims. Although the representatives accepted Tsereteli's reassurances at face value, they also became aware of the danger of the influence of Miliukov and other bourgeois figures in the Provisional Government and could not but be struck with the similarity between Kadet pronouncements and those of their senior officers.

Their chief, General Gurko, was accorded tokens of adulation on his several appearances before the congress, yet engrained distrust of the commanding staff was expressed in still another draft statute on soldiers' committees, which went considerably beyond those currently in force.⁵⁷ Although the election of officers was specifically ruled out, the proposal affirmed the "right of recommendation" by soldiers' committees, that is, their preferences having equal weight with those of superior officers in consideration of appointments to command positions, and in the case of a negative recommendation, the "right of removal" (*otvod*) by the soldiers' committee on the next highest level. This far-reaching proposal seems to have had no permanent practical application, but the front committee subsequently brought it before the Polivanov Commission and argued for it before the Petrograd and Moscow soviets; moreover, copies were sent to other army committees, causing considerable alarm in the command structure.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 198.

⁵⁶ See Ibid., pp. 194-208 *passim*.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 208ff., for the full text.

⁵⁸ This is recounted in a report published subsequently by the front com-

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Finally, a permanent front organization was created, whose members conformed to the typical party composition of higher-level committees elsewhere: twenty-eight Social Democrats (a "united" fraction, of which only six were Bolsheviks), thirty-two S.R.'s, and fourteen independents. One-third of the total was composed of officers of junior rank, and the rest were enlisted men. Thus, as in Petrograd, a Menshevik-S.R. coalition maintained a controlling majority in the interests of revolutionary defensism and in effect became an extension of the authority of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet.⁵⁹

Two other front congresses were of comparable significance. The Tiflis Soviet, the preserve of Georgian Mensheviks, sponsored a Regional Congress of the Caucasus Army (April 23-May 1) with the same approximate intent and results as the Minsk prototype. General N. N. Iudenich, commander of the Caucasus Army, cooperated for the same reason as had General Gurko, namely, in the hope of restoring a semblance of order and fighting spirit. Here too there was a crisis over the domination of the presidium by "party groups" of the rear, but the prestige of Menshevik Duma deputies Gegechkori, Zhordania, and Ramishvili enabled the sponsors to install their handpicked candidates. Only one or two lonely officers espoused the now unpopular Kadet slogans of "full victory" and "keeping faith with the Allies"; the rest endorsed once again the resolutions of the All-Russian Conference of Soviets. An impassioned debate arose over the appropriateness of party "fractions" in soldiers' organizations at the front. The decision to prohibit them was motivated by local considerations: in the Caucasus the nationalist parties represented an element of confusion and real competition to the socialist parties and would demand representation in all leadership bodies. In contrast to their low profile at the Minsk congress, the small group of Bolsheviks did not hesitate to embarrass the Menshevik leadership openly by accusing them of standing too much in awe of the bourgeoisie as a "progressive force" in the Revolution.⁶⁰

Of more interest is the Congress of the Northern Front, held

mittee, *Otchet o deiatel'nosti 1-go ispolkoma s'ezda R.S. i K. Deputatov zapadnago fronta za mai-noiabr' 1917 g.* (Petrograd, 1917), pp. 4-5.

⁵⁹ See V. I. Miller, *Soldatskie komitety*, p. 296.

⁶⁰ For documents and extensive excerpts from the proceedings, see *Revoliutsiia 1917 g. v Zakavkazi. Dokumenty i materialy*, ed. S. E. Sef (Tiflis, 1927), pp. 94-115. For relevant points, see pp. 97-99, 105-6, 114-15.

in Pskov between April 22 and 25. While not of decisive significance in an organizational sense, since all three of the constituent armies had held congresses and had functioning army committees, it nevertheless reflected the process of politicization at a more advanced stage than the others, first, in that the debate focused on the issues raised by the April Crisis, and second, in that the participants were already experienced, politically informed committeemen and cogently articulated a range of political viewpoints. Moreover, this congress is a more accurate index of the prevailing front leadership, since rear organizations and local soviets had held a separate congress shortly before and were scarcely visible in the proceedings. In essence, it was a small working congress at which issues were to be thrashed out by those who were already "professional" committeemen.⁶¹ As before, the command hoped that it would be able to resolve problems of supply, morale, and discipline and therefore encouraged officers to participate. General Danilov appealed to the gathering that Russia was now one of the "great democracies," along with England and America, and must fight on to full victory for the goal of "the self-determination of peoples."⁶²

Two officers urged the body to postpone the discussion of "political" issues until the end of the agenda in order to concentrate on its chief task of restoring the fighting capacity of the Army. A soldier endorsed their view:

You don't hear about peace at the front! You comrades should organize the rear. We have confidence in the Provisional Government. Besides, we know that the Soviet is there and won't permit the moneybags and the kulaks to get the upper hand over the workers and peasants.⁶³

⁶¹ See V. I. Miller, *Soldatskie komitety*, pp. 296-303, and *Protokoly zasedanii s'ezda predstavitelei armeiskikh i tylovykh organizatsii severnogo fronta (apr. 22-25, 1917 g.)* (Petrograd, 1917), pp. 73-74. Present were 72 delegates: 18 from the Twelfth Army, 16 from the Fifth, 10 from the First, and 28 from rear organizations. Of these, 39 were soldiers, 10 were officers, 3 were military bureaucrats, and 1 was from Zemgor, and there were also 8 workers and 9 peasants representing civilian Soviets (2 are unaccounted for). The April Crisis, one of the most important turning points of the Revolution, will be dealt with in the sequel to this volume; for background the reader should consult Chamberlin, I, chap. 7, or any other general work.

⁶² *Protokoly zasedanii*, pp. 4-5.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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But several Menshevik committeemen from the Twelfth Army stoutly defended the notion that Miliukov's note to the Allies could not go without response, as it was a direct challenge to the peace policy of the Soviet as endorsed by the government declaration of March 27. They were opposed by an eloquent spokesman of the Fifth Army Committee, A. A. Vilenkin, who argued that the Soviet had declared the incident closed and that since the Soviet was standing guard over the interests of democracy, the front committees' task was to restore the fighting capacity of the Army. From its inception, the Fifth Army Committee had followed an unqualified defensist line, revealing a special loyalty to its commander, General Dragomirov, and more than once had expressed alarm over the disorganizing policies of the Soviet. The commander, for his part, gave wide berth to the activities of the committee, allowing it free use of staff facilities, including a press for its newspaper, which began publication at the beginning of April. Still, the activist element in the committee formed a "socialist bureau" and identified itself as an "arm of the revolutionary democracy."⁶⁴

In the present situation Vilenkin's position threatened to divide the assembly about equally into "political" and "antipolitical" factions, thus buttressing the Kadet orientation of the officers. But the Mensheviks of the Twelfth Army summoned their full arsenal of arguments to convince the assembly that the front represented the "reserve army" of the Soviet, which had to be brought into action to demonstrate to the bourgeoisie that the forces of democracy were not to be trifled with. Their spokesman, Kharash, declared:

⁶⁴ This is apparent above all in the committee organ *Iz5A*, which began publication only on April 18 but gave account of the committee's prior activities. Vilenkin is one of the few army *komitetchiki* whose personality stands out sufficiently for comment in memoirs; see, for example, Tsereteli, I, 374-75, II, 189-92, Woytinsky, pp. 282-83, Stankevich, pp. 180, 244, and Littauer, pp. 156-57. A lawyer and Popular Socialist before the war, he volunteered for the Sumskii Hussar Regiment. His reckless bravery in battle and his resolute defensism and loyalty to the command as a *komitetchik* seem to have stemmed from his desire for acceptance in the officer milieu of his regiment, where he served as a lowly messenger because of his Jewish background. Littauer describes him as a romantic and poet whose daring gained him the respect of the aristocratic officership, but he seems to know nothing of his activities as a *komitetchik* (interview with the author).

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We must nip in the bud every attempt by bourgeois circles to carry out their imperialist aims surreptitiously under the banner of popular slogans. . . . We allow them the exercise of power, but they must at every moment feel the guiding hand of the democracy, so that the iron will of the democracy becomes for the government an inflexible law.⁶⁵

Another delegate declared that Miliukov would not have dared to send his note had he sensed an adequate force behind the Soviet, and that it was up to the front to demonstrate that it represented such a force.

Willy-nilly, Miliukov's note became the center of discussion despite the objections of the minority, and all the unavoidable political issues connected with it were rolled out for debate—Soviet peace policy, relations between the Soviet and the government, the dangerous designs of the bourgeois circles. Even the harsh condemnation of Miliukov as the symbol of the “plundering adventure of capitalist imperialism” by the lone Bolshevik of the First Army Committee, Fedotov, did not seem out of place. An officer named Kamenetskii argued that, objectively, the goal of the war was self-determination and that if this were not secured for Poland, Belgium, Alsace, and the Balkan peoples, other wars would follow. For this reason, the Soviet peace policy required that the war be pursued until German militarism was defeated, and the task of the Soviet was therefore to provide leadership to assure that this goal was attained and not to surrender to the longings of the trench soldiers for peace. He was the first to advocate openly what the logic of forthcoming events was soon to impose, namely, that the Soviet must cease to push from the outside, but must authorize its leaders to work for its peace policy by entering the government. Unexpectedly, one of the military bureaucrats, seconded by a Zemgor official, supported the idea that Miliukov was testing the will of the democratic groups, which had to respond to the challenge. Vilenkin eventually yielded to the emerging consensus, protesting that he had no argument with his Twelfth Army colleagues and that the strengthening of the army's fighting capacity was integrally related to the Soviet leadership's campaign for a democratic peace, an argument that was to become standard in the rhetorical arsenal of revolutionary defensism in the coming months. Kharash quickly formulated a resolution suitable to the moment: the Pro-

⁶⁵ *Protokoly zasedanii*, p. 10.

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visional Government should promptly request the Allied governments to review the wartime agreements for the purpose of their revision, while the Soviet should energetically pursue its peace initiatives abroad and immediately call for an international Socialist conference to discuss terms of peace. The resolution was adopted unanimously, with only two officers abstaining.⁶⁶ The outcome demonstrated the extent to which the Soviet mold of politics, particularly on the question of war and peace, had come to sway the front committeemen and could even overcome the reservations of apolitical officers and militantly defensist intellectuals such as Vilenkin.

The above cases cover the two northernmost fronts, which were adjacent to metropolitan centers, and the Caucasus, with its base in the Tiflis Soviet, but the crystalizing of political attitudes is less satisfactorily documented for this period for the armies of the Southwestern and Rumanian fronts. The Special Army Committee had defined its strong pro-Soviet stance at its founding congress, and through the month of April its organ, *Izvestiia Vybornykh Osoboï Armii*, maintained a steadfast line on the Soviet peace policy, as did the *Izvestiia* of the Ninth Army at a somewhat later date.⁶⁷ At its founding congress in early May, the Sixth Army Committee was silent on the peace question, but it overwhelmingly endorsed an S.R. resolution on land redistribution and otherwise expressed confidence in the Soviet leadership on political issues.⁶⁸ It is safe to infer that a pronounced pro-Soviet orientation already prevailed throughout the committee structure, though clarity on specific issues might depend on the presence (or absence) of conversant, party-oriented intellectuals.

Divisional and regimental committees were usually preoccupied with the more mundane affairs of their units and turned to po-

⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

⁶⁷ See *IzOA*, Apr. 17, 18, and 25, and *Izvestiia Armeiskago Komiteta IX-oi Armii*, May 16 and others. Two editors of *IzOA*, Sgt. Presnov and Capt. Babkin, were cultivated Social Democrats (Babkin leaned toward the Bolsheviks) who employed the full range of Marxist arguments on behalf of the Soviet peace policy.

⁶⁸ See *Voin-Grazhdanin*, May 3 and 12. The congress seems to have been dominated by senior officers of remarkably liberal persuasion. Gen. Biskupskii, arguing against an alternative version of a resolution on soldiers' rights, declared: "Since we all recognize the Soviet as our leader and the committees exist everywhere with broad powers, I suggest we not try to improve on the Soviet position." Ibid., May 9.

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litical questions only sporadically. The few available records of proceedings for April show a very low level of sophistication, at times an even timid attitude toward commanders, but the political preferences revealed invariably lean toward the Soviet, while alarm over its interference in the domain of the government and expressions of hostility to slacking workers are no longer in evidence.⁶⁹ However, even though lower-level committees were seemingly preoccupied with such humdrum issues as sanitary conditions, replacements, and soldier-officer conflicts, they could suddenly come to life and react to political events, as is demonstrated in the records of the 46th Division Committee of the Eleventh Army, which on April 25 passed a resolution in response to Miliukov's note to the Allies:

Since the war primarily serves the interests of the propertied classes . . . and adversely affects the economy, wages, and the national debt, and since its continuance will eventually lead to the complete ruin of Russia, endangering our newly won freedom . . . the assembled representatives of the 46th Division request the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies to pursue by all possible means the speediest possible conclusion of peace without annexations and indemnities on the basis of the self-determination of peoples, and at the same time to stand guard over the interests of the laboring people of free Russia. To the Provisional Government, for its actions in the person of Miliukov, we issue a warning and demand the publication of the secret treaties entered into by the criminal tsarist government and the Allies.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Those front resolutions expressing pro-Soviet and Bolshevik sentiments that appear in Soviet collections have, of course, been selected for such formulations; see *VOSR. Aprel'skii krizis*, pp. 523-24, 539-40, for two examples. V. I. Miller, however, studied a sample of 17 regimental *protokoly* for the month of April and found that 8 of them did not discuss a single general political question. He was able to discern, however, that there was a marked shift from progovernment, "full victory" resolutions to those that clearly endorsed Soviet positions and called for control over the Provisional Government. See *Soldatskie komitety*, pp. 248 (chart), 254-59. Of the two regimental *protokoly* available to this author, one reflected no political concerns and the other, composed after a debate on April 20, endorsed a resolution of the divisional committee favoring "full victory." See orders of the 329th Regiment for April 20, TsGVIA, f. 2938. "Battle officers" seem to have been deputized from other units to argue the case.

⁷⁰ TsGVIA, f. 2376, Apr. 25. Since the resolution is embedded in the

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Apart from such episodic revelations of militant Soviet inclinations in April, the sources treat pro-Soviet orientation as an almost universal fact of life in the following months. The committee structure as a whole gravitated loyally in the Soviet orbit through all the various crises of 1917, the upper levels tending toward the defensist wing and adulation of Kerensky, the lower levels displaying wide diversity between right and left, but with a steady push to the left from their constituencies.

complete *protokoly* in the handwritten original, it is above suspicion as being preselected. The resolution's position was to the left of the official Soviet position of that time, even close to the Bolshevik formulation (publication of the secret treaties), and the *protokoly* otherwise reflects a more conventional defensist posture (preoccupation with replacements, measures to curb "agitators" against officers), allowing one to speculate that the persuasiveness of an individual or tightly knit group may have swayed the result. Still, it would indicate a predisposition to support what was thought to be the Soviet position.

CHAPTER IX



THE MOUNTING DISORDER AND THE DESIRE FOR PEACE

TOWARD THE END OF MARCH many officers, higher commanders, and even committeemen were reasonably hopeful that the turmoil of earlier weeks would gradually abate and that army life could resume its normal routine, albeit on somewhat altered foundations. The underlying problems causing unrest seemed to be nearing solution: the most offensive officers had been removed, the rest professed loyalty to the new regime or outwardly conformed, the orders of the Soviet had been clarified (superseded in effect by the authorized committee system and Order No. 114), the old system of discipline had been abolished, and, thanks to the Duma deputies and pronouncements from Petrograd, the misunderstandings of the early weeks with regard to the oath, tsarist emblems, disciplinary rights of officers, etc., had been resolved. Most encouragingly, the soldiers on the whole seemed ready to defend the new freedom against German attack, and to that end were concerned to hold the trenches.

The path back to normalcy, however, presupposed considerable improvement in the shattered relations between officers and soldiers and the acceptance, in the interests of defense, of the normal practices of maintaining the front, such as spelling other units on the line, repairing trenchworks, conducting training exercises in the rear, even taking elementary sanitary precautions and caring for equipment. Such longed-for improvements did not materialize, and instead, new and more ominous symptoms of decay began to surface, including continued desertions, fraternization across no man's land, disobedience to military orders, personal abuse of officers, and criminal laxity in the most elementary aspects of military routine. The only successes were accomplished through the arts of persuasion, more often by committeemen and emissar-

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ies from the rear than by duly constituted superiors, and more often by appeals to the Revolution, the Soviet, and the defense of freedom than to the principles of military discipline. Arrests of officers and the collective defiance of military commands continued at an alarming rate through April and into May, when the formation of the Coalition Government and Kerensky's advent as War Minister roused the front committees to the final effort to establish "revolutionary order." Committees for the most part were a moderating element, but they had to gauge their efforts carefully in order not to expend their moral capital too rapidly. Overstraining the appeal to revolutionary discipline only widened the gap between themselves and their constituency. Company and battalion committees usually rode with the current, presiding over discussions of orders, demanding that officers explain them, and on occasion revoking them. Regimental and higher-level committees increasingly performed the role of fire brigade and backstop for command authority, and as a consequence found themselves ever more frequently at variance with lower levels, a fate they shared with Soviet institutions generally. Soldier discontent tended to find an outlet in improvised actions inspired by anonymous agitators from among their ranks and without. In short, the soldier element revealed impulses and reactions that were subject to no institutional restraint, not even of the committees, impulses that could be fanned, but not extinguished.



The turning point is marked in military reports of the last few days of March and early April. On March 28 the commander of the 47th Ukrainian Regiment (Eighth Army, Southwestern Front) reported the refusal of several companies to execute orders on work details and replacements on the line. He was already accustomed to talking up orders with the aid of committeemen, but he noted that this time the soldiers refused to form ranks and declared outright that "we don't need hilltop 1064"; their argument was that their officers "talk only about smashing the Germans," whereas the Soviet of Workers' Deputies had decided on a purely defensive war and "international Social Democrats" were about to arrange a peace. The report blamed the unrest on "delegates" from supply units of two neighboring divisions (the 11th and 165th), who constituted a "compact group of agitators." Fortunately, a patriotic worker-deputy from Kiev broke the impasse

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with an ardent appeal for the defense of freedom. The incident reveals a number of features that became characteristic of such confrontations: the expectation that peace efforts by the Soviet were about to bring results; the logical deduction that offensive preparations were therefore superfluous and that "holding the line" was all that was necessary; a hardening attitude toward officers and the command structure and the darkest construction of their purposes; the elusive presence of agitators, seldom identified; and the expedient of spokesmen or "commissars" with revolutionary credentials to redress the situation.¹

It is no accident that fraternization became a troubling issue around this time. Easter was approaching (the first week of April), and since fraternization had assumed massive proportions around that holiday in the previous two years, particularly on sectors facing Austrians, the soldiers were again ardently hoping for a respite from the rigors of trench life. True, this time the German command was determined to turn it into a concerted campaign to subvert the Russian soldier, but the mood of the latter was fed primarily by the expectation of imminent results from Soviet peace initiatives. These expectations were even shared by many of the better informed committeemen and intellectuals in uniform, who frequently perceived their role at this juncture as carrying the revolutionary virus into the German trenches. Lacking clear guidelines from the leadership in Petrograd, they leapt at the opportunity for lively exchanges over the lines. Attempts to counteract the spontaneous response of the Russian soldiers by machine-gun and artillery fire led to countless ugly incidents in the month of April and drove the wedge even deeper between officers and their men.

On the basis of lower command reports the commander of the Fifth Army, General A. M. Dragomirov, rightly judged that a turning point had been reached, and conveyed his observations to General Ruzskii by special messenger on March 29:

The mood in the army is becoming more tense with every passing day. That interlude of calm, which was noticeable accompanying the assembly of delegates from all units [the

¹ *RDRA*, pp. 42-43. The soldiers were also familiar with newspaper reports blaming the Stokhod disaster on the indiscipline of the troops and the soldiers' committees, and they held the command responsible for this slander. The commander requested to be relieved of his command and suggested that the Duma and the Soviet each assign one deputy to every division to assist in the restoration of order.

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Fifth Army Congress of March 23-27] has been replaced in recent days by phenomena of an extremely dangerous character. Arrests of officers and commanders have not ceased. To the former accusations of sympathy to the old regime and injustice toward soldiers have been added rotations to the line out of turn and sending people to certain death just to seize captives [that is, normal scouting operations to obtain information]. There have been cases of refusal to move into position because a unit was on the line at Eastertime last year. . . . In reserve, regiments declare their readiness to fight on to full victory, but then balk at the command to go into the trenches. . . . All thoughts are turned toward the rear. Each one thinks only of how soon his turn will come to go into reserve, or how to get a pass to Dvinsk. . . . A simple maneuver of replacement on the line has become a hazardous operation. . . . On these grounds, I am very anxious that the forthcoming regrouping operations will lead to serious excesses.²

In one of the instances cited by Dragomirov, a regiment had refused, in spite of four hours of explanations and exhortations, to replace other units in the trenches. The soldiers' argument was that, as one of the newly formed "third divisions," they were insufficiently equipped for front-line duty, and in any event they had spent more time in the trenches than other divisions formed at the same time. Appeals to revolutionary patriotism fell flat: "Let those outfits in Petrograd who go around screaming and hanging out flags with 'war to full victory' come and take our places in the trenches, so they can see for themselves how to get victory."³ A deluge of such reports must have poured into Stavka in the first half of April; on the sixteenth General Alekseev drew up a comprehensive assessment for the benefit of War Minister Guchkov and Petrograd politicians:

The situation in the army grows worse every day: informa-

² Ibid., pp. 43-45. Reports of other commanders at this time reflect a similar awareness; for example, Gen. Lechitskii noted on March 29 that "the maintenance of discipline becomes more difficult with each passing day," and he blamed it on the noxious influence of the Soviet, the current military reforms, and the "pacifist newspapers" that were reaching his front in "massive quantities" (ibid., p. 48).

³ *RazA*, p. 33.

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tion coming in from all sides indicates that the army is systematically falling apart.

(1) Desertions continue unabated: in the armies of the Northern and Western fronts between April 1 and 7, 7,688 soldiers are reported as deserters . . . a number manifestly and considerably underestimated. . . .

(2) Discipline declines with each passing day; those guilty of violating military duty are completely indifferent to possible criminal punishments, convinced of the extreme unlikelihood of enforcement.

(3) The authority of officers and commanders has collapsed and cannot be restored by present methods. Owing to undeserved humiliations and assaults, the *de facto* removal of their authority over subordinates, and the surrender of such control to soldiers' committees, . . . the morale of the officer corps has sunk to a new low.

(4) A pacifist mood has developed in the ranks. Among the soldier mass, not only is the idea of offensive operations rejected, but even preparations for such, on which basis major violations of discipline have occurred. . . .

(5) Defeatist literature and propaganda has built itself a firm nest in the army. This propaganda comes from two sides—from the enemy and from the rear . . . and obviously stems from the same source.⁴

A more fundamental revolution in consciousness had taken place among the soldiers than any observers had originally supposed, and by mid-April the command structure was fully cognizant that the methods of restoring order tried hitherto were ineffectual.

Why the collective behavior of the soldier mass should take such a turn at a time of otherwise encouraging developments is not subject to precise formulation, but one can observe in every revolution of this magnitude sudden inexplicable surges of mood and behavior, which can be described with varying degrees of accuracy but never adequately explained. (What set off the "Great Fear" of 1789? The September massacres? The Terror? Thermidor?) In this case one can clearly see that the soldiers were reacting in part to certain external developments—the Soviet and government peace pronouncements, the overzealous drumbeating of the bourgeois press, the overtures of the enemy to fraternize,

⁴ *RDRA*, pp. 61-62.

the dawning awareness of a conflict between the Soviet and the Provisional Government, etc. But underlying all this was an irrepressible, urgent longing for a respite from the agony of war that the March slogans no longer satisfied. No one knew better than the trench soldier the true costs of the war in human terms, and this consciousness was evident in his every action and reaction. The ominous developments noted by officers signified his determination to strike out on his own, if need be, to bring about peace and not to rely passively on the efforts or facile suggestions of others, not even those of his elected representatives. The neurosis over offensive preparations was a reflection of this new determination. He knew very well that the unloading of lumber was connected with the construction of salients, which in turn were connected with the taking of hilltop 1064—all of which were pointless if peace were at hand. He alone knew the price in blood of hilltops.

The influence of agitators, who, though clearly at work, are never firmly identified, is of secondary importance. The soldier responded to the most primitive slogans and lent credence to the most fantastic accusations against officers because of his intense feeling that the restoration of officer authority meant an endless continuation of the war. The harping of the metropolitan press on "full victory" and the vital necessity of Galicia and Constantinople, which his officers frequently tried to pass off as the united voice of right-thinking "free Russia," simply magnified his anxiety and reinforced his image of both officer and cultured Russia as "burzhui." No matter whether the agitators were enemy agents, Bolsheviks, half-baked intellectuals in uniform, or disgruntled NCOs and over-forties (and at this point they were most likely all of the above except Bolsheviks), they could only formulate what he already inwardly felt to be true.

The most alarming phenomenon to the command was the rash of refusals by units to execute operational and routine military orders. Approximately twenty major instances are mentioned in documentary sources from between the end of March and the second week of May, and there must have been many more to account for the expressions of concern in the high command. They occurred in every army (only the Fourth Army facing Bulgaria is unaccounted for) and with a fair degree of regularity (two or three per week). Most of them were connected with the ordinary rotation of units in the trenches or training and work details (es-

pecially with regard to the repairing of trenchworks), the remainder, with major regrouping operations that required the transfer of units to other sectors of the front. Many involved the newly formed divisions, which typically complained of insufficient machine guns, baggage trains, clothing, and other equipment, or of being understrength, but senior officers rightly interpreted these arguments as mere camouflage for an underlying reluctance to facilitate in any way the continuation of active operations.

The preoccupation with peace is reflected in nearly all of the incidents in one form or another, though generally along the lines of the two instances already cited. In recounting two such incidents, the commander of the Eleventh Army, General Gutor, attributed them to "a complete exhaustion with the war and an overwhelming desire for the speediest possible conclusion of peace, which is presumed to be possible on terms honorable to both sides."⁵ The Ninth Army commander, General Lechitskii, commenting on similar incidents, specifically blamed a perverted understanding of the Provisional Government's Declaration on War Aims of March 27 and what he described as "defeatist newspapers" that were reaching the front in large quantities.⁶ General Lukomskii, now commanding the First Corps (First Army, Northern Front), dealt personally with a recalcitrant battalion of the 86th Infantry Regiment in mid-May and was confronted with the argument that since the Soviet had renounced conquests, no offensive operations were to be undertaken until the British and the French did likewise. When pressed to obey a lawful order of their duly constituted superiors, they replied: "Why should we submit like sheep to the orders of a command that neither feeds nor clothes us properly?" When Lukomskii, to shame them, observed that their arguments sounded Leninist, they replied that yes, they were Leninists and believed only Lenin. The ease with which Lukomskii won them over with promises to improve their food and clothing demonstrates that their Bolshevism at this point did not cut very deep, but weariness with the war and indifference to their elementary needs manifestly did.⁷ From these and other examples, it is clear that every sort of news from the revolutionary capital easily aroused the underlying longing for peace and was a major psychological factor in the behavior of rebellious units.

The second major feature of these affairs was the hardening at-

⁵ Report of Apr. 24, *ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

⁶ Report of Apr. 15, *ibid.*, p. 60. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

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itude toward command authority and officers generally, and the increasing tendency toward violent resolution of conflict situations. March, at the front, had not been the same as in Petrograd or Kronshtadt; personal violence and abuse had remained at a minimum, even when an officer was being removed from command. The angry and explosive elements had been contained for the most part by the more pacific mood of the majority, and the embryo committees had been an expression of the soldiers' desire to do things in an orderly fashion. Nevertheless, suspicion of officers and their motives ran very deep and was only masked by the scenes of "reconciliation" and the much-advertised collaboration of committees and commanders. Although this legacy of respectful treatment of commanders was still predominant in April, an ever stronger current of incipient violence manifested itself in the following weeks. Behavior in individual units ranged from adulation of popular commanders (which did not preclude rough treatment of lower officers) to complete control of regiments by restless, violence-prone elements, but the majority of units covered the spectrum in between.

The demoralization of entire regiments, a rare phenomenon in March, became increasingly common in April and epidemic by May. Committees were almost never the cause of deteriorating discipline at the regimental level and above, and only occasionally at the battalion or company level. More characteristically, compact groups of agitators discovered clever techniques to excite mass emotions, which then threatened to spill over into violent disruptions. Such groups operated cautiously and secretly at first, but as replacement units arrived in increasing numbers near the end of April, bringing with them the virus of garrison indiscipline, they acted ever more openly. Often the tumultuous replacements styled themselves as "Bolsheviks," having picked up the antiwar slogans of the latter, but it would be premature to identify Bolshevik influence as a major cause of the deteriorating state of discipline at this point. Lenin had not yet won over his party to his uncompromising slogans, and the two organs of the Bolsheviks that were aimed at a soldier clientele, *Soldatskaia Pravda* and *Okopnaia Pravda*, only began publication in the third week of April and did not yet enjoy wide circulation at the front. Bolshevik agitation was to become a powerful influence at the front in the course of May (which will be the theme of a chapter in the sequel to this work), but on a soil already well prepared by other

forces. The agitators at this point appear to have been politically unsophisticated, but thoroughly alienated and hostile, front types who firmly intended to prevent the restoration of command authority and the resumption of active operations.⁸

In most of the major incidents recorded for the month of April, the sense of order and restraint is still dominant, although there were a significant number of exceptions. The troops lined up and stated their grievances civilly to Major General Popov, the division commander who treated with the 720th Regiment, and so did the "Bolsheviks" encountered by Lukonskii as late as May. But the alarming feature of the 47th Ukrainian Regiment's behavior had been its refusal to form up to greet the division commander (March 30). The arrest of General E. K. Miller on April 6 had begun in an orderly fashion, but quickly degenerated; while in captivity, Miller was beaten, stabbed with bayonets, and taunted by soldiers with insinuations of lynching. The arrest of corps commander General Mekhmandarov on March 30 had been precipitated by the refusal of two regiments of the Second Caucasus Division (the 703rd and 704th, two recently formed regiments in a new "third division") to obey orders to move up to the front. The regiments were under the control of a clever agitator, a Praporshchik Remnev (not further identified), who persuaded the assembled soldiers that "the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies has given us the right to remove commanders we don't trust," to which his audience responded: "True! True!" Although every officer in the chain of command from the corps commander on down was present and tried his hand at persuasion, Remnev was clearly in charge of the proceedings and kept the mood of the soldier mob at the brink of violence. When Mekhmandarov submitted to arrest to forestall a worse outcome, allowing an elected candidate to take his place, Remnev exclaimed triumphantly:

⁸ Since very few of the agitators complained of in the incidents discussed above can be even roughly identified, the matter is somewhat speculative, but virtually none of the units involved coincides with any identified in the literature as having harbored Bolshevik agitators in May and June, although those units continued to have a reputation for turbulence and mutiny. Units with a Bolshevik presence can be identified with relative ease, and the list remains fairly stable for the balance of 1917. In most cases specific persons having identifiable contacts with the party can be named. For the one possible exception, the vague figure of "Mikhailov," who claimed to represent the Petrograd Soviet and caused considerable unrest in several divisions of the Third Army, see n. 11 below.

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"See, comrades, I told you our bayonets would not be necessary."⁹

The tightly coiled tension between soldiers and officers, which threatened violent release, came out in an episode involving the 126th Rylskii Regiment (Eighth Army, Southwestern Front), which had been ordered with a companion regiment, the 127th, to move some distance to replace units on another sector. On the evening of the first stopover a delegation addressed a series of gratuitously insinuating questions to the commander: Why had the 127th followed a different route? Why had the orders been advanced from April 19 to April 17? Wasn't it possible to find more suitable quarters for the bivouac? Why were officers privileged to ride horseback? Further, the commander was accused of intending to leave the regiment for a rest in the rear, of intending to order the regiment to pacify the 127th, which was about to revolt, of having bridges to the latter's positions mined, etc. In spite of the commander's efforts to give satisfactory answers, the troops refused to move out on the following day, retrieved the field kitchen, which had been sent on ahead, and resolved to celebrate the Revolution and to honor fallen comrades that day while deputies were sent to corps headquarters to confirm their orders. The regimental committee disassociated itself from these proceedings, but was powerless to stop them.¹⁰ In early May several divisions on the Western Front (the 55th, 66th, and 67th) were brought to the pitch of revolt by an unidentified agitator, "Mikhailov," who claimed to have credentials from the Petrograd Soviet and who branded officers as representatives of the bourgeois class. At an improvised assembly of the 220th Regiment he was able to carry through a resolution of lack of confidence in the officers of the regiment and to install replacements. The commander of the XXXV Corps reported that Mikhailov's agitation had led to "excesses in violent form on commanding personnel."¹¹ A new level

⁹ See *RDR*, pp. 49-51. The 703rd Sums'kii Regiment was one of those that continued to be turbulent and acquired national fame in June for refusing to participate in the offensive and for the beating of N. D. Sokolov (author of Order No. One), who had been sent by the Soviet Executive Committee to restore order. The regiment was disbanded in July as incorrigible. See *ibid.*, pp. 161-62, 575-77. Though there was a hard core of dissidents, among them Praporshchik Remnev, nothing in the sources or Soviet secondary works identifies them as Bolsheviks.

¹⁰ See *RazA*, pp. 33-34.

¹¹ See *RDR*, p. 80, and *VOSR. Aprel'skii krizis*, pp. 547, 552, 555, 558. An incomplete summary compiled at Stavka on excesses of various kinds

of violence was reached in the double mutiny of the 517th Batumskii and 707th Neshavskii regiments on May 16-17, which ended in the arrest and flogging of the commander of the 177th Division, General Ia. Ia. Liubitskii.¹²

It is clear from the documents surrounding these affairs that the command structure had come to rely heavily on the moral suasion of soldiers' committees and other outside agencies to resolve crises that could not be settled by force. Virtually all generals of the high command, even those who later denounced the committees and supported Kornilov (Denikin, Lechitskii), called on them for help at one time or another and encouraged their subordinates to do so. Doubtless, hundreds of minor breaches of discipline were quietly settled in this way and did not find their way into military reports either because there were no complications or because the commanders did not wish to risk spoiling their rela-

during the second week in May seems to indicate an increase in the tempo and magnitude of such affairs. In the case of the 325th Regiment (Tenth Army, Western Front), one battalion refused to comply with work orders, which provoked a few old-regime utterances on the part of the regimental commander, for which he was arrested. In another instance, a band of armed soldiers of the 13th Rifle Regiment (Ninth Army, Rumanian Front) under the command of a Lt. Shchekin undertook the arrest of the divisional commander, but complications nearly led to the lynching of Lt. Shchekin! The entire 136th Division, which was being transferred from a soft berth in Finland to the front, refused to detrain in Riga and remained there; its example was followed by the 53rd Siberian Rifle Regiment. See *RDRA*, pp. 94-95. Earlier Soviet works identify "Mikhailov" as a future commander of the Red Army, M. V. Frunze, who apparently did carry the passport of a fallen comrade, M. A. Mikhailov, as a cover for his underground work in the Tenth Army, but V. I. Miller distinguishes him from the D. P. Mikhailov of the incident discussed here, whom he identifies as a Petrograd worker-Bolshevik sent to the front with Soviet credentials at the request of a deputation of the 55th Division. See *Soldatskie komitety*, pp. 208-9.

¹² The significance of the incident comes out in a telegram from Alekseev to Kerensky of May 21, which requested an immediate restoration of the provisions of the old military code, the execution of the guilty parties, and the disbanding of the two affected divisions. "The internal rot has reached the ultimate limit," Alekseev averred. "The troops are no longer a threat to the enemy, but to their own fatherland" (*RDRA*, p. 111). Since the affair was transitional to the major mutinies connected with the coming of the summer offensive, and since rich archival documentation was available to the author, it will be discussed extensively in the second volume of this work.

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tions with their men. For example, the minutes of the committee of the 46th Division (Eleventh Army, Southwestern Front) of April 8 record an extraordinary session called to deal with the refusal of two companies to replace other units in the trenches. The regimental committee had already resolved the incident, but the chairman was called upon for an explanation. It turned out that the 182nd Regiment had originally been slated to supply the replacements, but at the last minute it was ordered into reserve, and the duty fell without warning on the 181st, which refused to go. An agitator from a sapper unit, Mavrov (not otherwise identified), exhorted them not to move, since, he claimed, the departing regiment was taking all the machine guns and artillery support. The divisional committee issued a resolution of condemnation and demanded that the regimental committee investigate the sapper unit and report back.¹³

As time went on, lower-level committees were increasingly ineffective in dealing with crises, and divisional committees or hastily called corps assemblies were obliged to intervene (still later, army committees became the chief agency). A report by General Lechitskii on the 14th Rifle Regiment is typical:

On April 5 the chairman of the regimental committee explained to the company electors the impermissibility of their action; the electors acknowledged the impropriety of the refusal of work duty and issued a reprimand [to the soldiers refusing to work]; nevertheless, on the fifteenth two more companies again refused work duties, and only after long persuasion did one of the two agree to comply. At a second meeting of electors it turned out that the riflers have no con-

¹³ See TsGVIA, f. 2376, Apr. 8. In another archival example, the 332nd Regiment (83rd Division, XXXI Corps, Third Army) was ordered to replace the First Kuban Cavalry Division on the line, which had not had relief for over a year and whose horses were starving. The regiment refused, notifying corps headquarters that it would comply only if the need were "strategic and urgent." The Kuban Regiment was apparently restive, as another unit was quickly found to replace it. The corps commander reprimanded the 332nd, noting that the orders of the War Minister and the Commander in Chief were subject to immediate execution without discussion, but he no longer insisted on compliance. A resolution of the divisional committee branded the regiment's actions as "criminal and illegal," but apparently there were no further consequences. See TsGVIA, f. 2938, Apr. 6 and 10.

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fidence in their officers, nor even in their own elected representatives.¹⁴

By early May the commander of the Grenadier Corps (Second Army, Western Front), General Parskii, who was sympathetic to the committees, had come to the conclusion:

The company, regimental, and divisional committees have been functioning, and to do them justice, not without effect; they have considerably facilitated harmony between officers and soldiers, and have prevented or smoothed out various incidents, but nevertheless, at present they are not of much help, as they themselves no longer enjoy sufficient authority among the masses.¹⁵

As the commanders became disenchanted with the committees as a means of dealing with disorders, they ever more frequently called for authoritative political figures or "commissars" of the Soviet. Although the notion of commissars of the Soviet to serve at the front had been discussed in the Executive Committee since early March, and although a few had been sent in response to specific requests, the institution was not regularized until April, and only in late May did it actually begin to function in connection with preparations for the offensive. Here it is significant that commanders themselves were voicing the request; in some cases they were responding to the specific demand of rebellious units, but more often they seem to have hoped that such emissaries would counteract the soldiers' irritating appeal to Soviet pronouncements to justify their recalcitrance.

Although collective refusal to comply with orders was the most flagrant form of indiscipline in the month of April (at least in military reports), there were numerous less obtrusive forms as well. The periodic arrests of higher officers on various pretexts (suspicious orders, incautious remarks, "betrayal" to the enemy) continued unabated, and the abuse and forced removal of lower officers had become common practice. Committees sometimes requested the removal of objectionable officers, abusive language

¹⁴ *Raza*, p. 35. In connection with reports of instances of disobedience to orders and fraternization in the Twelfth Army, Gen. Radko-Dmitriev noted on May 5: "The committees have to a large extent lost influence; even though they do everything they can to help us, they are not listened to" (*RDRA*, p. 82).

¹⁵ Report of May 7, in *RDRA*, p. 85.

and neglect of duties being the most frequent charges. In spite of repeated admonitory directives of the War Minister, Stavka, and front headquarters, lower commanders frequently accommodated the committees in order to avoid further troubles.

It would be impossible to cover all the multifarious forms of deteriorating discipline in these weeks, but a few random samples may help to convey an impression. On April 20 the regimental committee of the 264th Infantry Regiment (Caucasus Front) informed the division headquarters by telegraph that their own nominees had been substituted for the regimental and all four battalion commanders, and it requested confirmation. The only charge was "lack of confidence" by the ranks.¹⁶ Colonel Roth and a battalion commander of the 325th Regiment were arrested on April 26 for being "adherents of the old regime." The second battalion had balked at the performance of work duties, and when their commander reported the fact to the colonel, he was overheard to remark: "Under the old regime we could have had them whipped, but now we have no means of forcing them."¹⁷ The regimental committee had opposed the arrest, but it was undertaken by the men of the second battalion, who were able to make it stick. The committee of the 517th Batumskii Regiment recommended the removal of a Lieutenant Romanchuk for an unnamed offense, and the temporary removal, pending investigation, of a staff officer over a conflict with Sergeant "S," to both of which Colonel Ostrovskii affixed to the protocol "agreed."¹⁸

B. V. Sergeev, a battalion commander in the Finlandskii Guards Regiment, records vivid examples of the forms of indiscipline that had to be tolerated. Once when an attack was expected momentarily at dawn, the machine gunners of a flanking position simply left their post because they had had no relief for twenty-four hours. They ignored Sergeev's shouts that they were leaving their comrades exposed, and he could not fire on them for fear of alerting the Germans to the situation. Fortunately, the attack did not materialize, and the machine gunners suffered no consequences. When the colonel ordered some new heavy mortars put in place for trial firing over the lines, the soldiers refused to allow it for fear the Germans would return fire. Sergeev pleaded to have the order reversed, but was refused. A second, more reliable company was persuaded to undertake the task, but only on the understanding

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 94-95.

¹⁸ TsGVIA, f. 3054, *protokoly*, Apr. 18 and 30.

that at the moment the mortars were fired, the trenches would be evacuated and would not be reoccupied until retaliatory fire was ended. A few badly aimed rounds were sent over, no return fire transpired, and the troops filtered back.¹⁹ Doubtless, other field books and diaries of officers are filled with instances of this kind.

Although the threat of physical violence hung over the officers at all times, relatively few instances of actual lynchings or brutalities are recorded for this period. The only documented instance of lynching to come to the author's attention is the already mentioned death of General Kartsev, commander of the Fourth Siberian Rifle Division, (Twelfth Army, Northern Front), while the beating of General Liubitskii (May 16) was regarded as extraordinary. In *The Russian Turmoil* Denikin etches with great passion the martyrdom of officers during the Revolution, but the lurid forms of torture and murder that he puts into a composite fictitious account of this period would seem to be overdrawn. His Lieutenant Albov, for example, is mercilessly beaten with clubs while asleep in his tent, and a regimental commander is literally crucified, bayoneted, and his ears and nose cut off. Barbarities of this sort occurred in a few instances in the tense weeks of the summer offensive and following the Kornilov affair, but in this case it seems that Denikin transposes the commonplaces of the Civil War back to the revolutionary period. In any event, it is difficult to find documented brutalities of such a gruesome order, and Denikin cites no historical examples.²⁰ The moment of vengeance taking had already passed, and the helplessness of officers was demonstrated daily, so that there was little reason to resort to excesses at this point.



In terms of expressing the soldiers' spontaneous feelings, there was no more typical phenomenon during this period than fraternization. Hardly a sector or a unit did not indulge in it at some point, and nothing provoked the soldiers to violent reactions more quickly than efforts to break it up with artillery or machine-gun fire. Wherever the opportunity presented itself, Russian soldiers poured out of the trenches, conversed in sign language with the enemy on no man's land, exchanged gifts and invitations to their respective trenches, and accepted with relish whatever attentions

¹⁹ *Finlandets*, xxxvii, 57-60.

²⁰ See *Russian Turmoil*, pp. 212-28. The account nevertheless contains many authentic touches and is well worth reading.

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were lavished on them. The alacrity and credulity with which they responded to every artifice of the enemy, even of poorly disguised intelligence officers, flabbergasted their superiors and left them for some time at a loss as to how to deal with it.

Episodic fraternization—by scouts, on quiet sectors, at Christmas and Easter—was a welcome relief to the grim business of war for all armies in the First World War. It had assumed considerable proportions at Eastertime between Russians and Austrians in 1915 and 1916, but in 1917 the German command, steeling itself for a titanic contest in the West, was counting heavily on the Revolution to keep the Eastern Front quiet. At first it thought to accomplish this by means of massive doses of propaganda and subversion through specially trained agents, as described by Colonel F. G. Freiherr von Gempp, intelligence chief of the Oberheeresleitung-Ost:

Thus the III-b Section, set up for the purpose of obtaining intelligence, by necessity now became a propaganda apparatus, at first by means of leaflets and newspapers, soon, however, through the introduction of intelligence officers and translators, who approached the *muzhiks* in the trenches. Even Russian prisoners of war from the Western Front were slipped through the line to give their comrades a going over.²¹

The first leaflets, however, had little effect because they unwisely tried to persuade the Russian soldiers that their tsar had actually desired peace but that he had been overthrown with the help of English intrigue to prolong the war. Soon, however, the Germans adapted their propaganda more realistically to the psychology of the peasant-soldiers, for example, claiming that the new government was about to redivide the land and that if the soldiers did not get home in time, they would not get their share.²² By mid-March a Russian-language newspaper, *Russkii Vestnik*, heretofore circulated among Russian prisoners of war, was fed across the lines. This propaganda offensive was blunted, however, by the

²¹ *Geheimer Nachrichtendienst und Spionageabwehr des Feldheeres*. Band X, II. Teil. Abschnitt 9: Mobile Abteilung III-b beim Chef des Generalstabes des Feldheeres im Jahre 1917. VII. Ostfront. Zustand des russischen und rumänischen Heeres Anfang 1917, p. 109 (microfilm typescript at HI, reel 1440).

²² See *RWK*, XII, 485-86, for confirmation on the German side, and Shliapnikov, IV, 84-85 (Gen. Dukhonin of Southwestern Front headquarters to Stavka, Apr. 6), on the Russian.

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lingering Germanophobia and quasi-defensist mood of the first few weeks of March.²³ But episodic fraternization initiated from the Russian side convinced the German high command of the good prospects for an organized campaign timed for the Easter holidays (April 1-2, O.S.); accordingly, instructions were issued to intelligence officers attached to the front armies to "influence the mood of the Russian Army in a sense favorable to us politically, in order to counteract the strong efforts of the English to do the same."²⁴ Detailed guidelines for this activity were laid down, and a three-day cease-fire for the Easter holidays was ordered regardless of what the Russians might do. That the Russian soldiers would be lured out of the trenches was taken for granted, and this expectation was not to be disappointed.

Although many personal accounts mention fraternization, fastening on such details as swaggering German officers delighting in their success, the lively exchange of products, the free use of rum and vodka as lures, only rarely do they take care to put everything into context; moreover, documentation in Soviet collections is less than satisfactory. Fortunately, General Miller's deposition bears unique testimony to the Easter campaign, covering every as-

²³ Several instances of negative reactions are noted in a censor's report on the Fifth Army of April 13; see *RDR*, pp. 56-57.

²⁴ *RWK*, xii, 493. Gen. Hoffman, chief of staff for the Eastern Front, bore responsibility for the operation, but drew extensively on the resources of the Military Intelligence Section of the Foreign Ministry for propaganda materials, translators, etc. A document entitled "Richtlinien zur Propagandatätigkeit an der russischen Front," issued in the name of the supreme commander of the Eastern Front on April 8 (N.S.), laid down the arguments to be employed in contacts with the Russians, for example, "if the present government, like the tsar's, continues the war for England's selfish purposes, then our military plans will change accordingly." For the text of a number of German propaganda leaflets and other relevant materials, see Shliapnikov, iv, 73-84, and Knox, ii, 600-602. (The present author has seen the originals of a number of German leaflets, handwritten and printed, in the archive of the committee of the Third Grenadier Division, XXIII Corps, Eleventh Army, Southwestern Front, TsGVIA, f. 2326, op. 4, d. 4, ll. 12-19, but was unable to take extensive notes. A handwritten one in poor Russian, reproduced crudely on mimeograph, stated: "Soldiers! We won't shoot at you. Send one officer and one soldier for talks. On the honor of a soldier we will let them return." The theme of England's crafty scheme to use Russia to win the war for its own selfish purposes weighs very heavily.) For Gerhard Wettig's extensive discussion of this subject, based in large measure on the German Foreign Ministry Archives, see *FO*, xii, 264ff.

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pect hour by hour and including every detail that would be of interest to a commander sensitive both to the purposes of the enemy and to the unique mood of his men.²⁵ In compliance with a directive, Miller had instructed his division commanders a few days in advance to take precautions. At dawn on Easter day, Austrian soldiers with white flags crawled out of their trenches and shouted over to the Russians that they had received an order for a three-day cease-fire. A promise of rum enticed the Russians to come out and meet them between the wires. First in small numbers, and then in ever larger groups throughout the morning, the soldiers of both sides gathered in the neutral zone to exchange presents, dance, play the harmonica, and otherwise enjoy themselves. The officers were powerless to prevent it, and a number joined in the spectacle, ostensibly to restrain their men, but becoming carried away in the process. A company commander who tried to break up the festivities by firing into the air drew angry threats from participants and nonparticipants.

As the day wore on, the proceedings became more organized, and the ultimate intent quite clear. First, Russian-language newspapers and leaflets were distributed, one of which portrayed Nicholas and the English monarch as look-alike cousins, suggesting that with the tsar gone, Russia need no longer do England's bidding. In the open sector between the trenches, which was wide and intersected by a road, a battalion or more of Austrians marched out in the mid-afternoon with a military band headed by their regimental commander. A large crowd of Russians gathered round (Miller estimates seven to eight hundred participants from both sides), and the Austrian colonel solemnly inquired after his Russian counterpart, as he would be delighted to make his acquaintance. A Russian division commander who had been directing artillery fire on the Austrian trenches (a few rounds were sent well to the rear) was forced to break it off when the infantrymen threatened to raise the artillerists on their bayonets. It was clear that the Russian soldiers were determined to enjoy their holiday and would brook no interference. It was more likely the approach of mealtime than the persuasions of the officers that brought the day's celebrations to an end. Besides, there had not been enough rum to go around, and the Austrians promised more for the following day.

²⁵ See MS, pp. 64-82.

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The Russian command had not been prepared to handle anything on this scale. The situation had developed into a mass phenomenon so unexpectedly that normal methods of control were out of the question. When Miller was first informed of the events occurring early in the day, he was not unduly alarmed and thought his standing instructions adequate. Only at 8:00 P.M. did he receive details accurately representing the magnitude of the affair. For the next forty-eight hours Miller was constantly on the scene, moving along the forward trenches, verifying the execution of his countermeasures, and observing the actions of the enemy through his binoculars. He ordered spaced-out fire along the enemy trenches to begin at 6:00 A.M. the following morning, and all officers were to explain to their men in person the treacherous intent of the enemy. The artilleryists had been reluctant to brave the wrath of the infantry during the day, but that evening they decided that the enemy's actions were a provocation and that they would be prepared to fire the following day, regardless of what the infantry might do. However, from lower commanders Miller soon learned of the ominous mood of the troops:

The infantry explained the artillery fire as a desire of the command to do the soldiers a bad turn and deprive them of the possibility to enjoy three days of human existence after an endless winter of hard work, battle, and sitting in the trenches in constant fear for their lives.²⁶

Such reports persuaded Miller to revoke the order to fire and to inform the troops of it that very night, but the absolute proscription on fraternization was to remain in force. Apparently it made the desired impression. From early morning Miller toured the trenches, walking along the breastworks in full view of the enemy, explaining the reasons for his orders, and answering questions of groups of soldiers along the way; no man's land remained empty, and not a single soldier ventured out to meet the enemy. In the meantime, from his vantage point he was able to make a detailed reconnaissance of the enemy trenchworks, which under normal circumstances would have been impossible.²⁷ He also verified the condition of the Russian trenchworks and ordered much-needed

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73. This bold action was undoubtedly the basis of the later accusation (after his arrest) that the Germans did not fire on him because he was German himself. See Knox, II, 612.

repairs while the guns were silent. There were minor violations of his orders later in the day: some Austrians had ventured out, beckoning to the Russians, the artillerymen opened up on them, and the men in the trenches screamed out curses until the word spread that Miller himself was present.

In his manuscript reminiscences Miller is anxious to convey the impression that his energetic measures and patient, fatherly explanations successfully thwarted the enemy's intentions and kept his troops in line. He stresses his wish not to offend the natural "Christian" impulses that had misguided his soldiers. A company that was exhausted from a long stretch in the trenches requested an extension of the cease-fire through the evening of the third day because they were looking forward to a much deserved rest in the rear and a "spectacle" (skits, entertainment). Miller granted the request, even attending the affair, where he was given three loud hurrahs. Nevertheless, Miller's actions undoubtedly enhanced his reputation for old-regime strictness and were easily exploited by those who arrested him several days later. Complications arose when Lieutenant Kukharenko, a popular artillery officer who had held an ongoing seminar on political questions in his forward observation post, volunteered to "counteragitate" during the fraternization festivities, explaining that he was fluent in German. The suspicious division commander's refusal was obviously the genesis of subsequent rumors, as after Miller's arrest the interrogator pressed him repeatedly on the "case" of Lieutenant Kukharenko. (Why was such a popular officer transferred from his observation post? Why were his services to counteragitate not accepted?)²⁸ Miller had also ordered the arrest of a doctor, a veterinarian, and a *praporshchik*, all from units some ten miles to the rear, who had rushed to the scene. They also claimed to be counteragitating, but knew no German. In view of the dangerous situation and the certainty of enemy intelligence activity, Miller's action was an understandable precaution, but the arrested men were quite probably socialist intellectuals who wished to "carry the revolution to the enemy." They were not likely to forgive and forget. On the third

²⁸ Miller's explanation, that a subordinate commander was simply carrying out a general order that officers were only to leave the trenches to persuade the soldiers to return and that he did not know Kukharenko personally, apparently went without effect. That Kukharenko was one of Miller's captors is evident from his assertion that he made Kukharenko's acquaintance only after his arrest. See MS, pp. 64-65, 71.

day Miller again ordered firing on a handful of Austrians who tried to renew the fraternization and the arrest of six or seven Russians who came out to meet them, but the latter successfully slipped into the labyrinths of neighboring trenches. Again there were angry protests. One can assume that versions of these actions made the rounds of other units in the corps and were the subject of discussion at the corps congress that decided Miller's fate.

Even though Miller could take satisfaction in his successful thwarting of the fraternization, the German command's basic purpose was realized in the fact of Miller's arrest and the accompanying turmoil. The military benefit of his efficient exercise of command authority was nullified by the resentments and suspicions he created in the course of it, which could only find an outlet in retaliatory action. The fortuitous incident over red ribbons that led to his arrest by replacement units would most certainly have been quickly reversed by the corps congress had his reputation been otherwise secure. But the stern measures he ordered to prevent the soldiers from taking part in what seemed to them to be a harmless respite from the war could only lead to the most grotesque interpretations of his actions and magnify many times over the other offenses charged to his account. Undoubtedly, the restless officer-agitators, who had been so handily arrested in spite of the difficult circumstances, afterwards staffed the committee structure and controlled the corps. The Germans could take satisfaction in the neutralization of a major unit that had hitherto been reasonably well disciplined under a capable commander despite the revolutionary circumstances. The XXVI Corps subsequently enjoyed a reputation for being the most demoralized unit of the Ninth Army. Its committees evolved into the typical revolutionary-defensist type, but by June they had lost all influence to nameless "Bolshevik" agitators. Fraternization continued to be commonplace in the XXVI Corps long after it was on the wane elsewhere, and one has the impression that agents of the enemy operated freely behind its lines.²⁹

Other reliable sources, though less detailed, point to a fairly uni-

²⁹ See *RDRA*, pp. 96 (report on fraternization, early May), 142-44 (report of June 19 on mass refusals of military orders, German spies, rejection of the offensive, complete demoralization), 171 (report of July 2 on the helplessness of committees in the face of Bolshevik influence), and 214 (report of Stavka of July 14 that the XXVI Corps "no longer exists as a fighting unit").

form picture all along the front. The laconic entries in Lieutenant Mitrofanov's diary record widespread fraternization by the Izmailovskii Guards Regiment on April 3 and 4: "Paths were cut through the wire. The scene was disorderly. Officers were drunk. The enemy came out with orchestra. The chancellor's speech was solemnly read [Bethmann-Hollweg's response to the Soviet Peace Manifesto]. Enemy officers photographed Russian positions."³⁰ General Selivachev alludes to fraternization attempts on his sector on the twenty-third and twenty-seventh of March without comment (he also faced Austrians). On March 31 the enemy invited deputies to come over for negotiations, and Selivachev expressed his fears of a repetition of the previous year's Easter incident, when two officers and eighty-five of his men were taken prisoner.³¹ Praporshchik N. V. Krylenko, later a prominent front Bolshevik, conducted negotiations in no man's land with a German officer over the terms of an Easter "armistice," but, Krylenko claims, the German officer ordered his men back for fear that Krylenko would influence them. Krylenko was taken to army headquarters because of these activities, but in his version the soldiers threatened to lynch the entire army staff if he were not released. He was, and became forthwith a legendary hero and was elevated to the chairmanship of the Eleventh Army Committee.³²

Though silent about the Easter holidays, other sources record fraternization at later times. An incident involving a company of the 517th Batumskii Regiment on April 8 was condemned, in rather mild terms, by the regimental committee. Colonel Ostrovskii, as usual, disciplined two junior officers for the affair, one for conversing with a German officer on the pretext of trying to "capture" him (three days in the stockade) and another for failing to report the incident for a whole week (reprimand).³³ Captain Sergeev of the Finlandskii Guards Regiment recorded an instance in his field book on April 12:

To the commander of the regiment: In the Tenth Company soldiers were fetching water from a well in front of our lines, and the Germans, seeing this, came out of their trenches and tried to enter into conversation. They did not speak Russian.

³⁰ See op. cit.

³¹ *KA*, ix, 129-30.

³² See N. Krylenko, "Fevral'skaia revoliutsiia i staraia armia," *PR*, LXI-LXII (Feb.-Mar. 1927), 247-48.

³³ See TsGVIA, f. 3054, order for Apr. 17 and *protokoly*, Apr. 15.

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Artillery fire was employed, after which the Germans hid themselves in their trenches.³⁴

A number of examples from soldiers' letters were noted by the Moscow censor:

As soon as we arrived on position we came out of our trenches to the Germans and they to us, leaving our weapons behind. . . . They treated us to cigarettes and even to a few cigars. That was on April 23; now they say, "Rus, don't shoot!" and ours say, "Then don't you shoot," and we stroll right along the trenches until the artillery boys, theirs and ours, open fire.

At Easter the Austrians came out together and congratulated us for the holidays, and we walked up and down between the wire; then they came to our trenches and we to theirs and concluded a separate peace, no firing at each other. Since then, to this very day, there has been almost no firing.

On April 18 they rolled out the white flag and the red. . . . The German cried, "*Pan* [Polish form of address], come out to the middle." Theirs and ours came together; theirs said, "Rus, no shooting, peace!" Ours answered, "Absolutely right, we need peace." . . . They gave out cigarettes, then our officers ordered the batteries to open fire, and we took off. Even so, our soldiers still get together with the Germans; they come to our trenches and we to theirs. They haven't fired a shot in over a month, but always cry, "Rus, don't shoot." They throw over proclamations that say, if you shoot, we'll shoot back, but you know who gets it in the neck if that happens—the infantry, ours and theirs. Our side still continues to shoot. But something's going to happen soon. Our soldiers are saying make peace, but the command still holds out for war to victory.³⁵

Although occurring on a lesser scale than that during the Easter days, the continuing fraternization kept the Russian command on tenterhooks for the rest of April and discouraged all ideas of resuming active operations.

³⁴ Field book, MS, Archive of the Finlandskii Guards Regiment, RA.

³⁵ *RDRA*, pp. 91-92. The letters are undated, but internal evidence indicates that they relate to the latter half of April and early May.

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In spite of the interesting and fairly consistent details to be harvested from these sources, the documentary record on fraternization from the Russian side is fragmentary and to a certain extent misleading. Political figures, Stavka, military reports, and front committees seem to have conspired together to minimize the phenomenon. The only compilatory report emanating from Stavka that appears in Soviet publications has obviously been heavily edited and in its original version was probably deliberately low-keyed.³⁶ The bourgeois press, so easily alarmed about many other things that detracted from the war effort, seemed blissfully unaware of the problem. The Minsk Front Congress, which featured resounding patriotic speeches by political figures, generals, and front committeemen and overwhelmingly approved Tsereteli's resolution endorsing the capacity for offensive as well as defensive operations, gave the impression of an army fired by the zeal of revolutionary patriotism; yet a secret polling of units at a closed session revealed an appalling picture of almost universal, de facto armistice all along the line. The information was conveyed in strict secrecy to the Executive Committee in Petrograd, which very nearly, according to Woytinsky, who was privy to these off-the-record discussions endorsed fraternization as a means of revolutionizing the German army and obtaining a democratic peace without bloodshed, the very logic that was so attractive to the trench soldier.³⁷ (One unlettered soldier-delegate of the congress struck a dissonant note at a public session by declaring forthrightly: "We made our own peace with the Germans, who agreed not to shoot until the congress is over." He was greeted with em-

³⁶ See *RazA*, pp. 37-38. For Tsereteli's opinion that Soviet publications are reluctant to include documents on fraternization because they would reveal the inspiration of the German General Staff, see his *Vospominaniia*, II, 31. This view probably has some justification, but Tsereteli himself is reluctant to concede the extent to which the soldiers' response was spontaneous and massive. Contrary to Tsereteli, this author is inclined to feel that field commanders were themselves reluctant to admit that they could not cope with the phenomenon and reported on it only when they could successfully break it up.

³⁷ Voitinskii, *Gody pobedy i porazhenii*, 3 vols., MS, HI, III, 82. These manuscript memoirs are considerably more extensive and more frank than his later published memoirs, which differ not only in basic facts, but also in basic attitudes; these memoirs exude pessimism and frank recognition of the widening gulf between the Soviet leadership and the masses at a very early stage, whereas the published memoirs tend to exonerate the leadership and lay more explicit blame on the Bolsheviks.

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barrassed laughter and denounced as a German agent, to which he indignantly replied: "I'm no agent, but an honest Russian tiller of the soil [*khleborob*], and don't know a word of German.")³⁸

German sources give a more comprehensive picture of the scope and seriousness of the operation than do the Russian. One gets the impression that in the two weeks following Easter the front lines became a virtual sieve, with delegations going freely back and forth between the trenches, concluding local cease-fire arrangements, freely mixing in small groups at night when officers were asleep and more openly where officer authority had weakened. German intelligence officers were able to circulate freely, and even spoke to large groups of Russian soldiers by posing as "socialists" or peace emissaries (soon *parlamentory* became the accepted nomenclature). Doubtless, numerous agents were slipped through who posed as simple Russian soldiers (easily recruited from Carpatho-Ukrainians, Baltic Germans who had defected, Poles, and even captured Russians).³⁹ Max Ronge, an Austrian intelligence officer, estimated that operatives of the Central Powers had made successful contacts in 107 of the 214 Russian divisions by Easter, and in 145 by the end of April (70 percent of the total).⁴⁰ Instructions to intelligence officers (*Nachrichtenoﬃziere*) by Eastern Front Commander Prince Leopold von Bayern were: "The Russian regiments are to be neutralized by engaging them directly in peace negotiations." An end was declared to the general cease-fire and to mass fraternization between the wire, Russian soldiers were no longer to be permitted in German trenches (this continued illicitly anyway), but German "officers" (that is, intelligence officers posing as ordinary officers) were to encourage the other side to send "deputies" by daylight under white flag to negotiate local armistices. In treating with the Russians, they were to argue that the Central Powers had already proved their desire for peace, and that it was up to the Russians to take some initiatives.⁴¹ The idea was to give the Russian soldiers, preferably through their committees, every reason to pressure their superiors to take the "negotiations" seriously and to become enraged at

³⁸ S. A. Solskii, MS, RA, p. 43. Solskii was a Polish socialist (SDKP) who at this point strongly supported the Bolsheviks.

³⁹ See Max Ronge, *Kriegs- und Industrie-Spionage. Zwölf Jahre der Kundschaftsdienstes* (Vienna, 1930), p. 270.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁴¹ Von Gemmp, *op. cit.*, pp. 111ff.

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every "provocation" against these peace efforts by artillery or machine-gun fire. The technique was extraordinarily successful; through most of April military activity, even routine shelling of enemy lines, was scarcely noticeable.

Two cases of the activities of German intelligence officers can be documented. A Lieutenant Baumeister, a German Balt who had been educated in Russia, carried on a lively propaganda campaign among Russian soldiers and became a popular figure in the region of the Seventh Army (Galicia, Southwestern Front). He presented himself as an ordinary German cavalry officer, a "socialist" by conviction, who was interested in bringing about peace. He circulated freely behind Russian lines with an escort of Russian soldiers who guaranteed his inviolability. Although the Russian Army command was fully aware of his activities, his arrest could not be carried out for fear of antagonizing the troops.⁴² The activities of the other agent, Max Wild, paralleled those of Baumeister in the region of the Third Army (Western Front). Wild has written a vivid personal account of his exploits (romanticized, of course, but nevertheless illuminating), but his description of his activities in this period is disappointingly brief and lacking in significant details. It can almost be quoted in full:

I grew more and more bold now [after Easter] and went from trench to trench in order to hold conversations there and circulate revolutionary writings. In the end I just went over to the Russians and conversed with individual soldiers. In my zeal to be of service I did my utmost to explain to the Russians the advantages of revolution. I drew a stirring picture of all the misery that lay before them unless the Russian people took the country's destiny into its own hand.

Invitations were soon brought over to me from other units of the Russian forces, begging me to talk to them as well and explain matters and show that they were an ignorant people. Now and again some N.C.O. would appear and request me politely to return to my own trenches, or the Artillery Commander would be obliged to give orders to fire on me. "No, stay here, comrade, he daren't shoot you! Come again, nothing will happen to you!" And so the days were full of suspense, and in the evening there was plenty of work

⁴² Ibid. Baumeister served as an intelligence officer on the Eastern Front throughout the war and figures prominently in the von Gempp materials.

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to do in drawing up reports telling of my success as a missionary of the revolution.⁴³

The *parlamentory*, however, were not everywhere welcome, and activity on the scale of Baumeister's and Wild's was obviously exceptional. Counterpropaganda exposing them as spies and provocateurs was becoming increasingly successful, and tacit cease-fire arrangements informally arrived at between soldiers were more common. Throughout most of April informal truces, both spontaneous and German-inspired, kept the Eastern Front inactive, and the Germans were able to transfer divisions quietly to the Western Front.⁴⁴

For the Central Powers, however, the propaganda offensive was rapidly reaching a point of diminishing returns. They were able to meet successfully the test of the Nivelle offensive (April 15-29, N.S.), but it was imperative to launch a decisive counteroffensive before the American armies arrived in significant numbers. They knew through intercepted radio messages (April 30, N.S.) that General Alekseev had committed himself to the Allies for an offensive as soon as the weather permitted. They were also aware of a hardening attitude on the part of soldiers' committees and non-Bolshevik socialists. Unless their efforts could bring about a dependable separate peace so that a large number of forces could be released for a decisive contest in the West (an armistice in place would not do, because a two-thousand-mile front would still have to be defended), the strategy would have to be abandoned. Furthermore, alarming reports were coming in, not only from the shaky Austro-Hungarian units but also from German units, that friendly contact with the Russians and the lull in fighting was undermining the combat spirit of their own armies.⁴⁵ Consequently, the German-Austrian high command planned an all-out propaganda offensive designed to terminate hostilities altogether; if unsuccessful, it would be followed by a resumption of operations. Feelers were to be sent through various points along the front to army commanders to broach the idea of a general armistice aimed

⁴³ *Secret Service on the Russian Front* (New York, 1932), p. 197.

⁴⁴ See *RWK*, xii, 496, and chart 26. The chart reveals that between April 15 and July 1 (N.S.) the German Army transferred fifteen divisions from the Eastern to the Western Front, and the Austrians six to the Italian Front; in the same period the Germans transferred twelve battered divisions in the reverse direction, the Austrians apparently none.

⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 497ff. On the Austrian army, see Ronge, pp. 271-72.

at a separate peace. Even if such overtures were initially rejected, which was likely, general knowledge of them among the Russian troops would perhaps compel compliance, or at the very least, lead to serious complications paralyzing the military effectiveness of the Russian Army.

The first probes were made in the last days of April (O.S.) in the region of the Fifth Army (Northern Front). German *parlamentory* announced to credulous Russian troops that they had important proposals to make to the army commander, and they were duly brought blindfolded to General Dragomirov. The latter, in view of the uncertain mood in his army, dared not reject the offer out of hand, but instead tried to exploit the situation for counterpropaganda. Claiming that the *parlamentory* had no serious proposals and lacked the credentials and powers to negotiate seriously for peace, he suggested in an interview for the press that their sole purpose was to deceive Russian soldiers so that troops could be transferred to the Western Front.⁴⁶ This was followed up on May 4-5 (O.S.; May 18-19, N.S.) by a mass propaganda assault, as ninety-six *parlamentory* were launched simultaneously, armed with an official offer from Prince Leopold for a general armistice. Attempts were made to reach the headquarters of the Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Ninth armies, but only in the case of the Ninth Army were they received, and the offer was rejected. Russian resistance to German approaches had considerably stiffened, and a number of the *parlamentory* were taken captive as spies; others were fired upon when they tried to cross the lines, and the rest were politely or not so politely rebuffed.⁴⁷ At the

⁴⁶ See *Iz5A*, May 2. This version was widely circulated by the Russian command as an example of German perfidy, but it probably had the opposite effect of that intended; see the version of French journalist Claude Anet, *Through the Russian Revolution* (London, 1917), p. 198. For extensive documentation on the affair, see Shliapnikov, iv, 88-92, 343-44.

⁴⁷ For a listing of the results on the Austrian sector, see Ronge, p. 273. Among those apprehended was Max Wild (op. cit., p. 199), who tried to reach the headquarters of the Third Army. He did—as a prisoner of Russian counterintelligence. The front soldiers had promised to rescue him, but to his dismay the area around the headquarters was occupied by the Fourth Cavalry Corps, the only unit of the Third Army that had proven immune to German peace propaganda. The story of his escape is at once a classic of romantic espionage and a serious document of the Revolution. His arrest is triumphantly recorded in the regimental orders of the Buzuliiskii Regiment of May 16 (TsGVIA, f. 2938). For Alekseev's general order of May 9 to take all *parlamentory* prisoners, see TsGVIA, f. 3054, May 25.

end of May the German command ordered an end to the campaign, conceding its virtual failure.

The Soviet and the soldiers' committees were very slow to take a position on fraternization. The delegates who reported on the phenomenon at the Minsk Congress were themselves confused and looking for guidance. Tsereteli's firm resolution on "revolutionary defense" had not revoked the Soviet Peace Manifesto's invitation to reach hands across the mountains of corpses to compel governments to make peace, which was precisely the opportunity the current situation seemed to afford. It was tempting to Soviet-oriented elements to conclude that, despite the pernicious designs of the German high command, the moment should be used to carry the message of revolution to the German trenches. There was considerable uncertainty in the Soviet leadership over how to implement the peace policy, particularly over how it applied to the armies facing each other in the field. Tsereteli and Chkeidze had taken a firm stand on readiness for active operations, which they conceived of as compatible with Zimmerwald Internationalism, but the Executive Committee harbored a sizable swing group of unpredictable, dogmatic internationalists (Sukhanov, Steklov, and perhaps Sokolov). Woytinsky, in the unpublished version of his memoirs, admits that he, along with a majority of the Executive Committee, favored the idea of adopting the slogan of fraternization as a means of carrying the revolution to Germany, but Tsereteli's adamant opposition turned the majority sentiment around.⁴⁸

Tsereteli's own account is less than frank on this episode, but it is clear that his defensism hardened under the influence of certain of the upper *komitetchiki* from the front, particularly Kuchin of the Twelfth Army Officers' Soviet and Vilenkin of the Fifth Army Committee. Both gave the Soviet peace formula a strictly defensist interpretation and vigorously opposed fraternization from the outset, arguing that the German soldier, so long as he was a willing instrument of Wilhelm and the German General Staff, was not a brother worker or socialist. Fragmentary evidence points to considerable ambivalence toward fraternization on the part of lower-level committees, but the Fifth Army Committee took the lead from the very outset in developing countermeasures. By April 15 it had set up an "agitational section," whose agents were to tour the units, regularize the committee structure, and explain

⁴⁸ Gody pobedy, MS, III, 85.

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Soviet positions. The agitators were instructed to explain the disgrace of a separate peace, the necessity of "active defense" (which by no means violated the principle of "no annexations"), and above all, the German General Staff's desire to use fraternization to weaken the Russian Army in order to be able to transfer their best troops to fight in the West. (They were also to point out the fallacies of Leninist slogans "if asked.")⁴⁹

At the end of April, a delegation from the Fifth Army Committee headed by the ardent defensists Vilenkin and Khodorov came to Petrograd for the announced purpose of persuading the Soviet "to speak with a powerful and authoritative voice to strengthen the army in the field."⁵⁰ The discussion in the inner council of the Executive Committee was apparently heated and lasted far into the night, with the result that the Soviet took a clear public position against fraternization in a special manifesto. It's chief argument was that Revolutionary Russia could persuade other countries to listen to its call for peace only if it demonstrated the determination of its Army not to buckle under the threat of German imperialism. And at long last it tackled the question of fraternization in language designed to convince the simple soldier:

The [German] troops still follow Wilhelm and Karl blindly, they follow their capitalists and *pomeshchiki* that seize others' lands and commit robbery and violence. Their General Staff is only taking advantage of your trusting nature and the slavishness of their own soldiers. You go out with open hearts to fraternize and you are met by an officer of the General Staff disguised as a simple soldier. Without guile you talk with the adversary and he photographs our positions. You hold your fire for fraternizing, and beyond the enemy's trenches they move their artillery to new positions, they improve fortifications, they execute troop movements.

Comrade soldiers! Not by fraternizing will you attain peace, not by separate agreements by companies and regiments, not even by a separate armistice will you save the Russian Revolution. . . . Only your military might serves the cause of peace and enables the Soviet of Workers' and Sol-

⁴⁹ *Iz5A*, Apr. 20.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, which boastfully details the episode. See also Woytinsky, *Stormy Passage*, pp. 282-83.

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diers' Deputies to accomplish its revolutionary task in the struggle for peace.⁵¹

The manifesto buttressed the hitherto timid efforts of the soldiers' committees in combating fraternization, giving them a clear statement of the Soviet position and an arsenal of arguments that linked military discipline and battle readiness with the cause of peace. The arguments were endlessly repeated in the new press organs of the army committees, in resolutions of divisional, regimental, and corps assemblies, and in the innumerable speeches of defensist agitators. The command structure, now confident of committee support, proceeded more boldly to break up fraternization by force. The incidence of fraternization declined significantly, but at the same time conflicts between infantrymen and artillerymen became more ugly, as the latter increasingly carried out orders to resume firing. By the third week in May the front committees were fully mobilized behind War Minister Kerensky's efforts to restore the fighting capacity of the army and to prepare the troops psychologically for the forthcoming offensive. A test of the authority and prestige of Revolutionary institutions was in the offing.



Widespread as it was, fraternization did not cause nearly as much public anxiety over the health of the Army as did desertion, primarily because the consequences of desertion were visible (or thought to be so) in every major urban center and interfered noticeably with the convenience and provisioning of the civilian population. Hordes of unattached soldiers were everywhere, at railroad stations, on the streets as peddlers of small items, and in the villages as a growing element of discord. They were blamed daily in the press for fomenting disorders, causing crime waves, spoiling the morale of training units, and interrupting the flow of goods and services so vital to the war effort. Many of these reports were doubtless exaggerated, and the term "deserter" was loosely applied to account for disturbances of all kinds. Still, if for no other reason than to dispel the legends surrounding it, this phenomenon merits systematic discussion.

⁵¹ *RDRA*, pp. 76-79. That this episode signified a critical turning point in the mood of the Soviet Executive Committee toward the idea of the "acceptance of power" and entry into the Coalition Government a short time later will bear discussion in the second volume, but see Stankevich, pp. 121-24.

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It should be noted at the outset that deserters constituted a disorganizing phenomenon only of the rear and of the railroads, not of the front lines. Units at the front barely noticed desertion, and in percentage terms it had little effect on fighting strength. If disruptive elements voluntarily removed themselves, it was all to the good. Second, there can be no meaningful discussion of desertion until one clarifies the term and determines what sort of desertion entered into the available statistics. "French leaves" and the over-staying of legitimate leaves considerably inflated the statistics of this period and should not be counted as genuine desertions. On the other hand, veiled desertions and dereliction of duty—such as simulated injuries or illness, self-mutilation, falsifying of family affairs, or physical intimidation of officers to obtain leave papers—were not categorized but did significantly reduce fighting strength. In addition there is the problem of the 2.4 million Russian prisoners of war: for how many was captivity in reality involuntary, and for how many was it a form of withdrawing from the war? (The Bolshevik Krylenko claims that when Austrian and Russian patrols encountered each other they would lay down their rifles and debate: "Do we go over to you, or do you come over to us?")⁵² There is no scientific way of estimating these variables, but they make nonsense out of the official statistics.

The only scholarly discussion of the subject is that of General N. N. Golovin, who draws on the published statistical tables registering 195,130 deserters up to the end of February 1917, 85,921 from March 1 to May 15, and another 84,086 from May 15 to August 1, 1917. Golovin points out that these figures average out to a monthly rate of roughly 6,300 for the thirty-one months preceding the Revolution and 34,000 for the first five months thereafter.⁵³ Even allowing for the shortcomings of the data—the absence of stated criteria, suspicious deviations from army to army, and the lack of commensurability in the circumstances (how would the latter rate compare with the period of the Great Retreat or the five months of the Brusilov offensive?)—there is no reason to doubt an increase of this magnitude. Both Golovin and Gurko justifiably discredit the rumor of 2,000,000 deserters roaming in the rear, which alarmed the Russian public in late 1916, and give cogent reasons for the mistaken impression (overcrowded railroads above all). Yet, after making various corrections to the

⁵² *PR*, LXI–LXII, 243.

⁵³ Golovin, I, 205.

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available statistics for 1917, Golovin arrives at the same fantastic figure—1,900,000 deserters.⁵⁴ He simply assumes that the 1,500,000 disparity between the figure for all those mobilized and that for those who can be accounted for either in the active Army or on the casualty lists represents deserters after the Revolution; he also fails to differentiate between the rate of desertion during the early months, during the summer offensive, and during the final collapse. Nevertheless, he categorically asserts: "Mass desertions took place from the very outset of the Revolution. In essence, this was the beginning of spontaneous self-demobilization."⁵⁵

Such a drastic conclusion is unwarranted by the available facts or by logic. One need only glance at a breakdown of the data into front-line and reserve units for the Northern and Western fronts to establish that mass desertion was overwhelmingly a phenomenon of rear areas, not of the trenches (see Table 2). For the Northern

TABLE 2
DESERTIONS, MARCH-MAY 1917

Front	Front-line Units	Reserve Units	Total for Front
Northern	7,129	18,595	25,724
Western	5,184	19,516	24,700

SOURCE: *RMVTs*, p. 26 (Table 16).

Front this represented about 135 deserters per division (45 infantry, 8 cavalry) for the ten-week period, or between 1.1 and 1.5 percent of fighting strength; on the Western Front the comparable figure is 92 per division (48 infantry, 8½ cavalry), or 0.75 to 0.9 percent of fighting strength.⁵⁶ These very unsatisfactory "macro" data can be compared with "micro" data culled from the daily orders of the 329th Buzuliiskii Regiment, which kept meticulous records (see Table 3). (These are undoubtedly the kind of data fed into the staff machinery that ground out the official statistics, but it is hard to believe that the staffs of all regiments were as efficient as the 329th.) These figures should at least belie the

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 208, 206, and Gurko, *Memories*, p. 223.

⁵⁵ See Golovin, I, 208.

⁵⁶ See *RMVTs*, p. 26. The percentage computations are mine.

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TABLE 3

MONTHLY DESERTION RATE OF
THE 329TH BUZULIISKII REGIMENT, 1917

Month	AWOL	Returns	Net Loss (Official Desertions)
February	5	3	2
March	13	8	5
April	6	2	4
May	6	4	2
June	22	13	9
Total	52	30	22

SOURCE: TsGVIA, f. 2938 (daily orders of the 329th).

notion that a mass exodus from the trenches occurred in the first half of 1917. By this count, a mere 0.43 percent of fighting strength was lost to desertion to the end of May, compared with 0.83 percent lost on the Rumanian Front as a whole (front-line units only).⁵⁷ For a regiment that arrested its colonel in March and mutinied against the offensive in June, this is not a bad record, and refutes the claim of incipient "spontaneous self-demobilization."

Still, one must account for the massive numbers who crowded rear areas, trains, and major cities, and who violently resisted efforts to bring them into custody. Certainly it is not unlikely that the number of unauthorized absences greatly exceeded that officially recorded, especially in the first few weeks. In the confusion of that time many soldiers were anxious for the safety of their families and clamored to get home even for a few days. The most

⁵⁷ The figure for the Rumanian Front is recomputed from the figure given by Alekseev to Guchkov on Apr. 16, in *RDRA*, p. 61. To this regimental profile one can add the figures on the overstaying of leaves, which were registered separately and also affected fighting strength: slightly incomplete data show that of 237 men returning from leave in April and May, 167 were on time, 16 overstayed 1 or 2 days, 30 overstayed 3 or 4 days, 12 overstayed 5-8 days, and only 8 more than 8 days (among them, 1 for 31 days and another for 58). The corresponding figures for June are 164 out of 261 on time, 41, 33, 16, and 6; in other words, at the very time when the regiment was mutinying against the offensive, the rate of returns remained approximately the same.

horrifying rumors were in circulation, as for example, that the *pomeshchiki* were burning down the villages and grabbing up peasant lands. So prevalent was the notion that redivision of the land was imminent, the command was obliged to wage a systematic campaign to counteract it. In a special proclamation dated April 7 and circulated to all armies, War Minister Guchkov specifically blamed "criminal leaflets" for instigating the idea (German intelligence was in fact responsible for the leaflets).⁵⁸ The agitation must have persisted until the end of April, since the headquarters of the Southwestern Front felt it necessary to circulate to all units a telegram from the Elizavetgrad District Peasant Soviet stating that "all these rumors are false, all localities are perfectly calm, the *narod* has firmly decided that the land question can be resolved only by the constituent assembly, in which the Army will take part; in the meantime, the people will permit no repartitions, no seizures, no sorts of disorders."⁵⁹

Though of doubtful exactitude, contemporary sources make various estimates of the numbers of deserters in the rear. Lieutenant Mitrofanov, passing through Kiev in early April, heard that a special guard was intercepting 1,000 deserters a day at the main railroad station; Captain Babkin of the Special Army Committee announced the currently circulating figure of 10,000 deserters in Kiev to an army congress late in May; Captain Petrushevskii, a hussar, heard the figure of 30,000 for the Riga front in mid-March; and the Petrograd newspaper *Soldatskoe Slovo* of May 15 and 16 refers to 2,000 in Gomel, several thousand in Odessa, and 300,000 in Moscow (an obvious typographic error).⁶⁰ Though the figures were frequently inflated with the large number of semi-legitimate travelers, there is no question that deserter colonies of considerable size existed in the major towns and cities, defying authorities and perpetrating disorders of various kinds. By banding together the deserters could act with impunity and bargain for

⁵⁸ "Revoliutsiia na fronte," *LR*, x, 89-90, and *RWK*, xii, 494 ("Auch sollte die bei den russischen Truppen bereits einsetzende Frontflucht zu verstärken, bei Zusammenkünften auf die in Russland bevorstehende Landverteilung hingewiesen werden, zu der die Front kämpfer leicht zu spät kommen könnten").

⁵⁹ *LR*, x, 90. This proclamation also appears in *Iz5A*, May 2, and in the orders of the 329th Regiment for May 16 (*TsGVIA*, f. 2938), in which it is cited as a front order of April 30 to be read in all units.

⁶⁰ Mitrofanov, *MS*, Apr. 7; *IzOA*, May 25; V. A. Petrushevskii, *Dnevnik velikoi voiny 1914-1917* gg., *MS*, RA (diary entry for Mar. 16).

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a favorable resolution of their status. General P. A. Polovtsev, who followed Kornilov as chief of the Petrograd Military District, recounts his difficulties with a large colony of over-forties who were camped out in the environs of the city and formed into fifty "companies." Rumors that they were about to be discharged had brought them together, and when informed to the contrary, they refused to budge until such a law was passed. Polovtsev tried starving them out, but they survived very well on what they earned from selling various articles and carrying luggage. With the help of Kerensky and trouble-shooters from the Soviet, Polovtsev had just arranged for their shipment to the front when General Verkhovskii, chief of the Moscow Military District, gave in and allowed his over-forties to go home.⁶¹ Though confirming references are unavailable, this was doubtless a consideration in Kerensky's decision to release the over-forties for fieldwork in May.

There are reports of similar colonies in Odessa, Minsk, Gomel, and elsewhere. Solskii estimates the number encamped outside Minsk at six to seven thousand. The 37th Infantry Regiment was ordered to round them up (probably in early May), but the deserters declared themselves to be "Bolsheviks," and the soldiers of the 37th refused to persecute them for their political convictions. The military command, fearful that the troops might become infected, left the matter to civilian authorities, who did nothing.⁶²

In March the sentiment among most Soviet-oriented groups was definitely hostile toward the deserters. From March 15 into April the *Izvestiia* of the Petrograd Soviet carried almost daily resolutions of various units (primarily garrison, but a few from the front) calling on deserters to return to their units by a certain date or be declared "adherents of the old regime."⁶³ The idea gained currency of giving deserters a certain period of grace to return without punishment, but as the response was not overwhelming, the terminal date was constantly postponed further into the future. Brusilov issued an order for the Southwestern Front on March 9, giving his soldiers until April 1. Other commands doubtless issued similar orders on their own authority. But without field courts

⁶¹ Polovtsev, *Dni zatmeniia* (Paris, n.d.), p. 81.

⁶² See Solskii, MS, p. 82.

⁶³ Although the great majority of resolutions seem to be from reserve and technical units from the environs of Petrograd, four infantry regiments from the front are identifiable, namely, the 177th, 470th, 471st, and 440th; see *IzPS*, Mar. 21, 22, 24, and Apr. 5, respectively.

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and the death penalty, there was little to make deserters feel any sense of urgency. Finally, on April 4 the Provisional Government proclaimed a general amnesty for deserters, draft evaders, and fugitives for various types of military crimes if they reported for duty by May 15! No explanation has been offered for this incredible leniency, though it may have been out of consideration for the railroads, which were greatly overloaded at the time. The result, however, was that many who were on their way back to their units returned to their villages instead.⁶⁴

Without the penalties of the military code, it was not easy to devise means of punishing deserters. To be branded as "an adherent of the old regime" was perhaps frightening at first, but soon lost its terrors. As with fraternization, Soviet bodies dealt very reluctantly with this hot potato. They sometimes cooperated in setting up guards at railroad stations, as is reported for Kiev and Odessa, but these do not appear to have been very effective. Colonel Makhrov devised a method that soon became customary:

On April 16, Efreitor of the scouting unit Grigorii Bandin was sent to Riga on official business and has not returned until the present time. . . . For the purposes of informing his fellow villagers of his disgraceful conduct and the termination of support [*paika*] for his family, the appropriate civilian authorities of his home district will be notified.⁶⁵

If the military code and the defense of freedom had lost their persuasive effect on soldiers, the opinions of fellow villagers and the termination of the *paika* carried weight. But increasingly, the typical threat was that deserters would be deprived of their share of the land. A resolution of the assembly of a guards division on May 4 approved a resolution to this effect; a list of the deserters' names was to be published in the newspapers and their home villages were to be informed.⁶⁶ The Odessa Soviet, in a resolution endorsing a general redistribution of all land to the peasants by the constituent assembly, stipulated that deserters should be excluded.⁶⁷ The Provisional Government, doubtless on the basis of

⁶⁴ For Brusilov's order, see *Vestnik Osoboi Armii*, Mar. 9; for the order of the Provisional Government, see *RPG*, II, 900, and *VVP*, Apr. 5; on the return of soldiers to their villages, see a report on the Special Army, dated April 11, by Duma deputies Maslennikov and Shmakov, *RazA*, p. 50.

⁶⁵ Makhrov, MS, Documents (regimental orders for Apr. 20).

⁶⁶ See *IzPS*, May 7, and *IzOA*, June 6.

⁶⁷ *SS*, Apr. 15.

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such expressions, passed a decree in early June that deserters would be deprived of land and a vote in the constituent assembly and that their families would be cut off from the *paika*. Such rights would be restored only if a soldier returned to his unit and distinguished himself in battle.⁶⁸

Soldatskoe Slovo claimed optimistically on April 9 that there were 24,000 returning deserters in Kiev, 7,000 in Moscow, and 2,000 in Petrograd; it apparently hoped to create a snowball effect, which, however, failed to materialize. The same organ reported on April 11 that a mass meeting of deserters in Odessa had been addressed by representatives of the Soviet and former deserters, who explained the terms of the government amnesty; the mood of the hearers was expressed in their unrepentant questions. Nevertheless, as the deadline of May 15 drew near, considerable pressure was exerted to bring deserters back to the front for the offensive, producing disorderly results. The government's *Vestnik* of May 17 reported enthusiastically on a huge roundup of 12,000 deserters in Kiev by the local militia, the military schools, and Soviet representatives. But the next day it was obliged to admit that the operation had ended in rioting and casualties on both sides, with the deserters disarming the militiamen and scattering in all directions. A mere 1,500 men were finally collected and put on trains. Whether they arrived at their destination is doubtful, but *Birzhevye Vedomosti* reported on May 25 that returned deserters had turned into marauding, drunken bands and were wreaking havoc in towns adjacent to the front, where they doubtless mixed with marching companies, unreleased over-forties, demoralized units, and other perpetrators of disorders.

However traumatic, it is clear that these disorders involved only a limited number of hard-core troublemakers—certainly not more than several tens of thousands out of an Army of seven million—who had created something of a revolutionary subculture in urban centers. They were only a fraction of those who could legitimately be regarded as deserters, and they probably did more damage to the Army by returning than by camping out in the rear. The total floating population of deserters at this time could not have been more than several hundred thousand, and it is clear that it was a fluctuating, not an escalating, phenomenon, with almost as many returning as departing. Whether there was a net gain after the May 15 deadline is doubtful, and even had there been one, it could

⁶⁸ *IzOA*, June 3.

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not have lasted long, as a new wave was set in motion by the approaching offensive.⁶⁹ If it is premature to speak of "spontaneous self-demobilization" before June, it is certainly no exaggeration thereafter. Finally, the drainage was preponderantly from the rear and reserve units rather than from the front, at a ratio of about three or four to one. Thus one can conclude that, like fraternization and other aberrations, desertions were a measure of the deteriorating state of military discipline, but did not yet signify the self-liquidation of the Army.

The much complained-of disorder of the railroad system was not caused primarily by deserters, even though the Russian public was convinced that this was so. Legitimate leaves were held up during the first two weeks of the Revolution (adding to the roster of deserters), but were thereafter granted indiscriminately under pressure from below. Also, the countless official deputations, deferred leaves, special pleas for Easter leaves, soldiers sent to the rear for supplies, etc., all peaked in early April. Soldiers with only a few days' leave became very impatient when trains were held up for unknown reasons, and in fits of frustration they commandeered trains and perpetrated violence on railway personnel. The press carried gruesome reports of beatings and murders of stationmasters, expulsion of civilian passengers, side-tracking of goods trains, and the like. *Soldatskoe Slovo* made it an object of particular concern, carrying the full text of a proclamation by Guchkov on the subject on April 6 and regularly chronicling the situation thereafter. It contributed to public sanity by publishing a long soldier's letter explaining that many soldiers had only short-term passes and had to ride on top of the trains in freezing weather, that many civilian travelers were only going to "visit aunty," and that the great majority of soldiers were on legitimate leaves. Noting how seldom letters from home reached the front, this soldier capsulized the frame of mind created at the front by the news of the Revolution:

⁶⁹ An unofficial meeting of front delegates in Petrograd in mid-May pooled its information and concluded that desertions had almost ceased from front areas and that mass desertion had always occurred primarily at the rear. The melting away of marching companies was identified as the chief source of desertion. See *IzPS*, May 15. The official tables on desertion rates show that desertions doubled on the Northern Front between May and late July, tripled on the Southwestern Front, and increased slightly on the Western and Rumanian fronts. See *RMVTs*, p. 26.

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Suddenly revolution. A wave of rumors from the rear fly into the trenches: "The *uriadniki* [rural policemen] and *strazhniki* [guards of private and public property] are shooting at the people and burning down the villages." Then suddenly a new rumor: "They're dividing up the land and whoever isn't there won't get any."⁷⁰

The wonder is that anyone was left to man the trenches, but the verdict of the evidence is that only a small minority yielded to the impulse, and that most soon returned.

At the end of April the situation was exacerbated by the decision of the Provisional Government to release the over-forties for fieldwork for four weeks and to discharge all those over forty-three.⁷¹ There are reports that in their eagerness to get home they stopped trains, expelled the wounded, and forced doctors to give them attestations of illness at gunpoint. The order occasioned considerable confusion and bitterness in the ranks. So as not to deplete units with large concentrations of these categories, supplementary instructions stipulated that dismissals for fieldwork should not exceed 15 percent of any given unit. Those excluded by this rule could be released as soon as others returned, and the committees were assigned the unpleasant job of determining precedence.⁷² One does not need much imagination to anticipate the kind of wrangling that would result, but in the case of the 181st Infantry Regiment it can be documented: the soldiers protested to the divisional committee that all over-forties should be released regardless of the orders, or they could not be responsible for the consequences.⁷³ Since the Provisional Government later recalled the over-forties to take part in the offensive, one can justifiably conclude that here was another badly bungled policy that unnecessarily worsened an already muddled state of affairs.



⁷⁰ SS, Apr. 25. The seriousness of the situation on the railroads was stressed in a telegram of March 31 from Alekseev to all units, which notes the large number of soldiers traveling without documents, violence to railroad personnel, etc., and orders cavalry units to be attached to stations and control points. Orders of the 329th Regiment, TsGVIA, f. 2938, Apr. 1.

⁷¹ See TsGVIA, f. 2938, orders of May 4, citing the directive of April 26 for the Southwestern Front.

⁷² See *ibid.*, and *Izvestiia Armeiskago Komiteta VIII-oi Armii*, May 16.

⁷³ *Protokoly* of the 46th Division, TsGVIA, f. 2376, Apr. 25.

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If mass disobedience to orders, fraternization, and desertions were the chief headaches of harried commanders in April, by mid-May they were marching companies, Bolshevik agitators, and hysterical opposition to the offensive, resulting in mass mutinies. The shift was gradual, and the new phenomena were simply a more advanced state of the same illness, greatly intensified by the certainty of a new round of bloodletting. Nevertheless, to establish a clear sequence it should be noted that nearly all the forms of unrest at the front in April are traceable to the breakdown in the normal patterns of military authority and the general excitement over the fact of the Revolution. The front was reacting to political events in the capital, to be sure, but in its own characteristic way and according to its own promptings, not to those of artful propaganda, except, perhaps, of the Germans. The agitators so frequently referred to in April seem, with one or two exceptions (Mikhailov), to be homegrown types rather than emissaries from the rear. The active Bolsheviks who were on the scene at this time and who secured positions in the committee hierarchy largely acted according to their own lights and are hardly distinguishable from committeemen of other party affiliations. Some units with a Bolshevik presence maintained a reasonable degree of discipline, while others, notably the Second Caucasus Grenadier Division, became totally demoralized without the benefit of Bolshevik agitation.

In May and June Bolshevism was to become the chief conduit of rebellion against the military order and against the resumption of active operations, through the influence either of party-affiliated Bolsheviks who had made the round trip to Petrograd, or of freshly baked "Bolsheviks" who arrived with marching companies, or simply of turbulent front types who fastened on the slogans of Bolshevik publications, which were now reaching the front in massive quantities. The formation of the coalition cabinet with Kerensky as War Minister and the Soviet's acquiescence in the fateful decision to launch a new offensive created a new political situation: revolutionary institutions, of which the front committees were a part, were now coresponsible for government policies, including the offensive, leaving the soldier masses with no outlet for their strivings other than illicit actions inspired by Bolshevik slogans. The sequel to this volume will chronicle how this new alignment led ineluctably to October.

RECAPITULATION: THE INVERSION OF THE OLD ORDER

IN CONSIDERING THE UPHEAVAL in the Army within the context of revolutionary events, one can justifiably conclude that the formation of the Coalition Government (May 5) signified the end of one major phase of the Revolution and the beginning of another. The first phase might be characterized as that of "dual power," the "politicization of the masses," or "the inversion of the old order." The second is far more complex than a single formulation can describe, but it was to be distinguished by the co-optation of the Soviet leadership into the faltering state order, the schism between the apex of revolutionary institutions and their constituencies, the spectacular success of Bolshevik propaganda in capitalizing on the disenchantment of the masses, the impossibility, as demonstrated by the Kornilov affair, of counterrevolution, and, finally, the spontaneous efforts of the masses to realize their program of land and peace without delay by supporting the Bolsheviks and Soviet power.

Refinement of this picture and analysis of the contours it assumed at the front will be the task of the second volume. Here it remains to pull together a coherent picture of the first great revolution of 1917, namely, the destruction of the old order and the substitution of a new amalgam composed of shadow state authorities and jerry-built for the most part from the institutions of "census Russia" and the "controlling" organs of the newly activated masses. At the hub, of course, was the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet, but the bifurcated structure spread out over the entire country and the Army in the shape of expanded city dumas and zemstvos, "commissars" of the Provisional Government, and the command structure (which alone remained from the old order), faced by countless local soviets and committees. In institutional terms, one power had not simply been substituted for another, but power itself became fragmented laterally and vertically, so that a meaningful hierarchy of authority no longer existed.

While the new configurations and all their ramifications must

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be left to other studies, it has been the purpose of this work to demonstrate the centrality of the upheaval in the Army to this process. The Army was the chief bulwark of the old order, its only major defense against revolutionary challenge and the cement that kept all other institutions in functional relationship to one another. In 1917, as in 1905, the preoccupation of the Army with the tasks of war severely limited its efficacy as an instrument of enforcement and repression. The February Revolution was in effect a test of the viability of that instrument after three years of war had eroded its morale and pushed social tensions to a breaking point. It was tried and found wanting.

The reasons for this failure, though it has been tempting for partisans of the old order to plead the unique circumstances of the war, are represented here as reaching far back into Russia's past. The autocratic system rested on a paradox: it had reshaped Russian society to serve the needs of a strong military state order, but at the same time it had built in severe inequities and tensions that could only be dealt with by further buttressing the military as an internal police force. The carefully circumscribed modernization that the autocracy allowed itself in the last half century of its existence aggravated rather than resolved social tensions, and weakened rather than strengthened the arm of the state designed to cope with them. The Revolution of 1905 had already demonstrated the contradiction inherent in the use of an army of mobilized civilians to quell civil disorders. The peasant and worker masses did not come out of that first revolution unscathed. But the credit for this goes not so much to the revolutionary parties as to the brutalizing experiences of the turmoil, which imparted new images of state authority and society. Unnoticed by cultured society, and even by the majority of the radical intelligentsia, this alienation was not simply away from reactionary tsardom, but also from the world of culture and privilege generally, and events between 1905 and 1914 did little to efface those fundamental attitudes. Thus, taking into consideration the evidence presented here, one can say with reasonable confidence that the peasant-soldiers entered the world war with the conviction that it was an alien enterprise, the patriotic outpourings of cultured society notwithstanding. The strains of the war ultimately produced a mood of intolerable impatience, intensified by every sign of weakness and disorganization in the state order.

The thesis of the present study is that the command authority

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of the Army was a direct casualty of the February Revolution itself, of the massive groundswell of popular feeling that shattered the autocratic framework, and that it did not simply erode over a period of time. The point scarcely needs demonstrating for the Petrograd garrison and the Baltic ports, where the soldiers' (and sailors') revolt was the most conspicuous mover of events (the others being the strikes and street demonstrations). At the front there was no overt "mutiny" on the same massive order, yet the uninterrupted chain of events, from the first tidings of the abdication to the formalization of soldiers' committees, was just as complete a revolution in authority, leaving the command in a position of sufferance and voluntary recognition at best and sweeping away most of the coercive powers that had formerly ensured obedience to orders. That the soldiers at the front, faced with the presence of the enemy across the wire, were more disposed than their comrades in the rear to observe military routine and to accept replacements for arrested officers should not cause one to overlook the fact that they keenly sensed their own power to impose changes, that they discussed and flouted orders without embarrassment, and that they institutionalized their emancipation from officer tutelage through their committees.

Indicative of the depth of the rupture at the very outset was the behavior of the senior commanders during the crisis. One need not dwell on Katkov's claim that the outcome would have been different had the generals not "betrayed" their monarch. From this author's point of view, an even more chaotic upheaval, with perhaps a more immediately drastic fate for the royal family and its adherents, would have been the result. The generals were concerned above all with maintaining the fighting capacity of the Army and accepted the abdication in order to gain some leverage over events before the front was affected.

But would it have been possible at any subsequent point for the Army command to exert authority either against or on behalf of the Provisional Government in order to arrest the revolutionary course of events? Alekseev did for a time urge Petrograd authorities to stand up to the Soviet, but his truculence found no echo with Rodzianko or Guchkov, or more importantly, with the lower levels of command. Virtually every army and front headquarters and every major garrison, including Stavka, was under siege by the massive, agitated crowds, and the most frequent victims of violent assaults and forced removals were garrison com-

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manders. Katkov blames the breakdown in authority in the garrison centers on the demoralizing consequences of the abdication, whereas by the time the abdication was known, the breakdown was an accomplished fact virtually everywhere. The field commanders, most notably Ruszkii and Dragomirov, advised strongly against repression, cognizant of its utter futility, and by March 11 Alekseev himself yielded to the strategy of accommodation with the revolutionary forces. Without such an accommodation, *a much more violent upheaval would have been the only prospect, and the partisans of authority could not possibly have prevailed.*

In fact, the command's new course of action—unquestioned loyalty to the Provisional Government and acquiescence in the system of dual power in the capital and soldiers' committees at the front—did temporarily succeed in bringing about a new equilibrium and calming of tensions. In late March the illusion took root at the front, as it had earlier in the rear, that the two species of institutions could share power and cooperate in harmony until the convocation of a constituent assembly at some vague future date. The mood of the newly elected soldiers' representatives was often influenced by suggestions of the command that criticized the revolutionary excesses of the rear. For a time it seemed that a united "front" would range itself against the "dual authority" of the "rear" and put pressure on the Soviet to uphold the authority of the Provisional Government for the sake of the war effort. The significance of the ensuing crisis is that it unambiguously demonstrated that two fundamentally different orders of institutions, representing different social layers and embodying irreconcilable goals, were in an unstable relationship and threatened to break apart at any time. The chief landmark of the month of April was that the Soviet clearly established its leadership over the "democratic" layers, which now expected the Soviet to exercise control over the "bourgeois" tendencies of the government. The Soviet's authority had in effect become nationwide, incorporating the committees at the front, as had already been recognized at the All-Russian Conference of Soviets of late March.

The greatest clarity had been achieved on the question of the war: the formula "war to full victory" had been exposed as harboring the annexationist schemes of the bourgeois groups and their spokesman in the Provisional Government, Paul Miliukov, whereas the Soviet position was now broadly understood as expressing the peace aspirations of the working people of all countries and

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as leading eventually to a negotiated settlement without victors or vanquished. The consequences of this new alignment were to solidify the Soviet position and expose the fragile character of the authority of the Provisional Government, in other words, to demonstrate that the February Revolution was in fact a social compromise that had left the ultimate shape of the new order and all the vexing questions unresolved.

Though initially overshadowed by the cataclysms of the metropolis, the front was very much a part of the overall complexion of power. Having undergone its own revolution, it demonstrated that it could not be enlisted to reverse the arrangements of the center, but only to reinforce them. The cleavage appeared to be strictly between the privileged and the "democratic" elements along the lines of their respective social and political goals. However, the Revolution had mobilized not only the hitherto inarticulate masses, but also the socialist and fellow-traveling intelligentsia. Although the breakdown of old-regime modes of authority and the impulse to replace them with something new must be ascribed to the enormous upsurge of popular energies, the construction of a hierarchy of representative institutions was largely the work of the educated radical intelligentsia, in and out of uniform. At the front, it was the wartime officers, volunteers, clerk-specialists, military doctors, veterinarians, and those workers and peasants, mostly literate, who had had a previous association with the revolutionary movement.

Once the edifice of revolutionary institutions was in place, the "committee class" oriented itself far more toward the politics of the center than toward the aspirations of their own constituency. There was little contact between committees on the army, corps, and division levels and the soldiers in the trenches. Only regimental committees involved themselves in the day-to-day concerns of ordinary soldiers, and even they had problems in comprehending the soldier mass. The most obvious distinctions in attitudes were with regard to the war and—what in the soldiers' minds was closely connected with it—to command authority. The intellectuals, although firmly loyal to the Soviet, were more deeply and permanently affected by the initial wave of "March patriotism" and reinforced the defensist wing of the Soviet leadership, whereas the soldier masses very quickly reverted to their rosy expectations of a speedy peace, in which sense they interpreted all Soviet pronouncements. They asserted their own grasp of things by

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freely and enthusiastically indulging in fraternization and by stubbornly ignoring or resisting the joint efforts of the command and the committees to put a stop to it. The threatening gulf between electors and elected was masked during most of April by the continuing conflict with the bourgeois groups over war aims; but with the April Crisis and the formation of the Coalition Government, that battle was ostensibly won, and the protective cover was removed. Soviet and state authority had coalesced, and, in the person of the "Socialist People's Defense Minister," pronounced in favor of a new offensive, inflicting on the masses a painful new adjustment of loyalties.

This unpleasant development demonstrated that, apart from the revolution in power and authority, an even more profound revolution in consciousness had taken place in the minds of the soldier-peasant masses, which the democratic intelligentsia initially catered to but did not fully grasp. Quite dramatically, the soldiers became aware of their collective ability to move events and work their will. Unaccustomed to articulate expression and organizational behavior, they deferred to the leadership of their cultural superiors, adopting enthusiastically their revolutionary and socialist rhetoric on the naive assumption that it expressed their own inner promptings.

Even though it was a surprising development that the peasant-soldier could part so easily from his traditional devotion to the person of the tsar, there is no doubt that the erosion had begun long ago (certainly the tsar's prestige had suffered seriously in 1905). The soldiers' reactions to the abdication and subsequent phenomena show that they identified the collapse of the monarchy with the end of the old order, root and branch, which for them meant the end of subjection to the *barin* and the *zemskii nachalnik* (land captains) back home and to the officer at the front. The expectations of land and peace welled up spontaneously as a logical concomitant of the overthrow of the old authorities and cannot, as conventional accounts would still have it, be ascribed to the propaganda of the socialist intelligentsia (or to that of the Germans). Land and freedom, *zemlia i volia*, had always been an indigenous aspect of folk psychology, which the populists had learned to exploit but had by no means invented. At the present juncture, with the war as the only obstacle to the realization of ancient longings, land and peace were similarly joined in an indissoluble bond. The peasants in uniform strongly sensed that the

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end of the monarchy and of the hierarchical order of authority were the same, whether at the front or in the country at large, and now they and their peers (the workers being honorary peasants) had prevailed over their erstwhile masters. Although no longer fearing the latter's power, the peasant-soldiers did fear their craftiness, their designs to take advantage of the peasant "darkness" to regain their lost position. Thus soldiers determined not to allow their officers to be their intermediaries with Petrograd authority but established their own direct ties, and thus they readily accepted the Soviet version of the conflict over war aims and the accusation that "victory" was a bourgeois code word for annexations. They were immensely reassured by the assertion of Soviet control over the Provisional Government and the prospect of a negotiated peace without further bloodshed. In the soldiers' minds, no return to "normal" military order or resumption of the war on a significant scale was conceivable; only a provisional "holding of the front" and a de facto truce across the trenches were permissible until the proper arrangements could be made. The chronic breaches of discipline in April were almost entirely connected with suspicions of the command's surreptitious preparations for new operations against the wishes of the Soviet.

The ground had thus been well laid for a new crisis, for in fact, peace was beyond the grasp of the new, Soviet-based Coalition Government without a demonstration of force in the shape of a new offensive. The upper-level committees and, with less unanimity, the lower ones were prepared to meet the challenge, and for this purpose they cooperated with the command in restoring military discipline at the front by functioning as adjuncts to the latter's authority. This could not possibly have been more at odds with the mood of the soldier masses, and if the Bolsheviks had not intervened decisively with their peace propaganda at the front in May and June, the very stones would have cried out. The Bolsheviks did not offer the soldiers a new vision of the Revolution, but a more speedy and direct realization of the original one.

The successive efforts of the soldier masses to lay claim to the promissory notes of the Revolution—in their revolt against the offensive, in their response to the Kornilov affair, and finally, in their mighty affirmation of Soviet power and immediate peace—will constitute the body of the sequel, to this volume, in which the fundamental character of the Second Russian Revolution of

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1917 will also be reevaluated. For example, I hope to show that it is improperly called the October Revolution, since it occurred not primarily in October, but in the course of the months from November 1917 to February 1918. Certain phases of it should be understood as having occurred much earlier in the year, as for example, in Kronshtadt and the Baltic ports. This Revolution should be regarded as the conquest by the masses of undivided Soviet power, the realization of their vision of direct democracy without compromises with the propertied elements, and the immediate execution of the agenda of the Revolution on land, peace, and workers' control of industry. The Bolsheviks' advance on the crest of this Revolution, and their eventual transformation of it into a party dictatorship, were long-term processes during the course of the Civil War, but that they occurred was a reflection of the bankruptcy of the Bolsheviks' political rivals, who in 1917 would not, or could not, come to terms with the social revolution that in fact had already taken place.

To correct the defects in the traditional perspective on the Russian Revolution, above all, the persistent preoccupation with events in the capital, there is no better arena to study than the Army at the front. The realization of mass control over the representative organs (the committees) and the recognition of Soviet power—with or without Bolshevik majorities—on most sectors within days, on others within a few weeks, of the coup in the capital nullified the possibility of resurrecting the Provisional Government or even of reaching compromise solutions, such as an "all-socialist coalition" or a new republic based on the constituent assembly. Only Soviet power answered to the determination of the mass of uniformed peasants and workers to consummate the Revolution as they understood it. The First Revolution of 1917 was the destruction of the old order and the creation of the soviets to express the will of the masses to the nominal bearers of authority; the Second Revolution was the assumption of unqualified power and the proclamation of the Soviet program.

REVIEW OF SOURCES

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE MANY STUDIES of the Russian Army, few are relevant to the present monograph, and most leave gaping holes uncovered. The only substantial study of the Army in 1917 in a Western European language is Gerhard Wettig's "Die Rolle der russischen Armee im revolutionären Machtkampf 1917,"* which makes admirably full use of the published documentation and the metropolitan press, but is weighted more toward Petrograd politics and the military leadership (to which he ascribes a more fundamental significance than I) and relies too much on émigré military literature. Although he thoroughly mined the German Foreign Ministry Archives to illuminate such important topics as fraternization, he was unable to consult sources in Russian archives; moreover, a number of significant Soviet works have appeared since the publication of his work. Marc Ferro, in his article "The Russian Soldier in 1917," does make use of archival and recent Soviet works to portray soldier attitudes in a new way, but his sense of timing and context often leaves something to be desired. There are Soviet monographic works covering each sector of the front, the individual phases of the Revolution in the Army, and, above all, the role of the Bolsheviks, but very few are of sufficient quality to merit serious attention. Most concern themselves with a very narrow range of questions, endlessly repeat stereotyped formulas, and make spurious use of archival sources. Among them, however, Burdzhakov is truly an accomplished historian, and his two volumes on the February Revolution would be landmarks in any language. V. I. Miller and A. M. Gavrillov are the two most knowledgeable specialists on events at the front, and both have written useful articles on key questions. (Miller's work, which includes a book on soldiers' committees, covers the early months of the Revolution and Gavrillov's concentrates on July to October.) M. S. Frenkin's *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie na rumynskom fronte 1917–mart 1918 g.* (Moscow, 1965) is the best work on a particular sector of the front, showing a boldness of conception and sense of historical realities wholly untypical of this genre (it was my pleasure to have

* Full citations to authored works mentioned in this review may be found by consulting the author's name in the Index.

REVIEW OF SOURCES

stimulating personal conversations with this author on our mutual interests). Its coverage for the period of this volume, however, is not extensive. (See note at end of this review.)

The most abundant and readily available resource is the literature by participants. The writings of a number of generals (Denikin, Lukomskii, Wrangel, Brusilov, Golovin, V. I. Gurko) and political figures (Kerensky, Miliukov, Sukhanov, Woytinsky) are available in English and other languages, although those of others are not (Tsereteli, Rodzianko, Gerua, Verkhovskii, Polivanov). Needless to say, these accounts are often laden with partisanship and self-justification; when I am compelled to call upon them for testimony, the reader is advised to administer the proper dosage of caution. Memoirs portraying the front from below the level of the generals are far fewer; the numerous accounts by front Bolsheviks, which are mainly in fragmentary form, are of doubtful reliability (Fedotov, Grazkin, Kokovikhin), although those of Pireiko and Tarasov-Rodionov are notable exceptions. Fortunately, there are a number of genuine classics by nonparty figures, including Shklovsky, Oskin, Chemodanov, and Kal'nitskii. The same general judgment holds for accounts by émigré officers, the exceptional accounts being those of Stepun, Lobanov-Rostovskii, B. V. Sergeev, and Littauer. A useful guide for pre-World War II émigré literature is S. P. Postnikov (ed.), *Bibliografiia russkoi revoliutsii i grazhdanskoi voiny (1917-21)* (Prague, 1936); a more comprehensive and up-to-date guide for works (mostly memoirs) by military figures is Aleksei Gering (ed.), *Materialy i bibliografiia russkoi voennoi pechati za rubezhom* (Paris, 1968). The corresponding guide for works by Soviets figures is *Istoriia sovetskogo obshchestva v vospominaniakh sovremennikov 1917-57* (Moscow, 1958).

The most reliable personal documents of the times are diaries and letters. Only a few of the former are available, but they are priceless sources. Several have been published in *Krasnyi Arkhiv* (Generals Selivachev and Boldyrev), while others are available in manuscript at the Russian Archive of Columbia University (Mitrofanov, Petrushevskii). For pinpointing dates, context, and spontaneous reactions, there is nothing more reliable and revealing. (The best memoirs are based on diaries, such as Sergeev's and Kal'nitskii's.) Ordinary soldiers, of course, did not keep diaries, but they often expressed their feelings and reactions in letters, even before the Revolution, censorship notwithstanding. Large

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numbers have been published in *Krasnyi Arkhiv* and elsewhere, and although these have been selected by Soviet editors to make certain points, when used with caution, together with census reports and other supporting documents, they can be taken as authentic expressions of attitude.

One form of valuable, readily accessible contemporary evidence is the metropolitan press. The newspapers of all major parties and tendencies are available on microfilm, and a substantial, well-preserved collection of originals is available at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California. The Army is an object of concern in all of them, but it must be kept in mind that the information published in them is highly colored to promote political aims, so that they often tell more about the struggle to control the Army than about the Army itself.

Much closer to the subject of this investigation are the organs of the numerous soldiers' committees and other newspapers aimed at a front readership, such as the Bolsheviks' *Okopnaia Pravda* and *Soldatskaia Pravda*. Each front and army committee had its own organ, as did a number of corps and divisional committees. Only scattered examples are available outside the Soviet Union, but Soviet libraries, particularly the Lenin Library in Moscow, have rich collections. A complete guide to this literature can be found in S. E. Rabinovich, *Bor'ba za armiiu* (Moscow, 1930), including the repositories where they were originally located. Although a good share of this corpus has been researched by this author, it finds limited application in the present volume because most front organs began publication only in late April or May; they will be used extensively, however, in the sequel. No monograph, Soviet or Western, has as yet availed itself of this rich resource. As evidence it has drawbacks, in that the content more accurately reflects the concern of the upper-level committees to influence a reluctant soldier constituency to observe discipline and pursue the war than it does the temper and actions of the soldiers themselves.

The basic foundation for the present study is the vast amount of published documentation, not only the records and proceedings of various bodies (the Soviet, the Provisional Government, the front committees), but also the many different sources appearing in *Krasnyi Arkhiv* (KA) and other journals, and in the many pre- and post-Stalin collections of documents (*sborniki*). The records and proceedings most important to this volume are above all

the *protokoly* of the Soviet Executive Committee (*PSPZ*), the All-Russian Conference of Soviets of March 29–April 3, and the Extraordinary Investigative Commission of the Provisional Government on the fall of the monarchy (*PTsR*). A survey of the footnotes will reveal how important *Krasnyi Arkhiv* has been as a source of materials of all kinds—staff communications, diaries, military, Okhrana, and censorship reports, memoranda of state bodies—outweighing the contributions of all other scholarly journals, Soviet and émigré, combined. Two other documentary works of the 1920s remain unsurpassed: the four volumes of A. Shliapnikov's *Semnadtsaty god*, with their voluminous appendixes and extensive extracts from documents, and *Razlozhenie armii v 1917 g. (RazA)*. Although Shliapnikov's monumental work is primarily devoted to various aspects of the February Revolution, he offers extensive, unduplicated material on the Army (on the Petrograd mutiny, the Soldiers' Soviet, communications to and from Stavka, regulations governing soldiers' committees, secret documents on the offensive exchanged with the Allies). The second work has not been superseded by the many later Soviet *sborniki*; it provides superior coverage of important themes—supply, discipline and morale, the formation of shock battalions, etc.—and includes lengthy documents that later *sborniki* tend to shy away from, such as two valuable reports by Duma deputies on the front.

The typical vehicle of Soviet scholarship since the largely barren Stalin era has been the documentary *sbornik*, above all, the monumental series covering 1917 month by month, *Velikaia Oktia-brskaia sotsialisticheskaia revoliutsiia (VOSR)*. Each volume contains a large section on the Army, carefully selected to magnify the Bolsheviks' role; nevertheless, each also includes significant staff reports and communications not available elsewhere. Several regional *sborniki*, though suffering from the same defects, provide important material on the front, for example, the valuable materials on the Congress of the Western Front of early April in *Belorussiia v period podgotovki sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii*. Most important for our purposes are the two individual volumes devoted specifically to the Army, *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v armii i na flote 1914–fevral' 1917 (RDAF)* and *Revoliutsionnoe dvizhenie v rus-skoi armii v 1917 g. (RDRA)*. Although they likewise follow the irritating practice of selecting short documents at random, so that no specific situation is illuminated by more than one document, the quality and selection of documents are superior to any other

of this type; most of the typical front phenomena of the months under question—arrests of officers, refusals to take the oath, the stir over Order No. One, fraternization—find excellent documentation. Without corrective and supplementary materials, however, one is unable either to judge the extent of each type of incident or to explore very deeply into its roots. For later months, however, the documentation becomes richer and is supplemented by *svodki*, or surveys, of entire sections of the front by higher staffs or commissars of the Provisional Government, so that the total picture assumes greater clarity and validity. Nevertheless, the months of March and April are seriously underdocumented.

Even with all the above-mentioned sources, it is often difficult to reconstruct the response of the front to each turn of events (thus the temptation to which Wettig sometimes succumbs, that is, to picture the rear as the prime mover of all developments). On certain questions of major importance, such as the formation of soldiers' committees and fraternization, documentation is almost nonexistent at the levels for which one would like to have it, and staff communications and personal accounts of later years can be outright misleading. I have been able to penetrate this barrier partially through the manuscript accounts, diaries, and other documentary materials to which I had access at the Hoover Institution and the Russian Archive at Columbia University. The intensely personal accounts written by lesser-known figures for posterity rather than for a reading public have proven to be far more revealing than most published memoirs. Thus those of Budberg, Makhrov, Shatilov, and Timichenko-Ruban supply some of the most vivid and persuasive episodes in my narrative, while diaries and documents supply others. The deposition of General E. K. Miller, held by the Hoover Institution, is a unique document of the Revolution. Arrested at the end of March for a trivial incident over red ribbons, Miller was sent under soldier convoy from his corps headquarters in Rumania to Petrograd, where he drew up this fifty-page document while in prison in order to exonerate himself. He touches on every issue of importance—the news of the Revolution, the abdication announcement, Order No. One, the oath to the Provisional Government, the embryo soldiers' committees, the delayed authorization from above, fraternization, and finally, his arrest—completely free from retrospective émigré bias and the selectivity of Soviet editors. (The author has seen an exact copy, possibly a carbon of the typewritten original, in the ar-

chives of the XXVI Corps in the Soviet Military Archives [TsGVIA, f.2230, op. 1, d. 419]).

The archival materials to which I had access from the Central State Military History Archive (TsGVIA) lend the same sort of concreteness and intimacy. At my disposal were the daily orders of the 329th Buzuliiskii and 517th Batumskii regiments of the XXXI Corps of the Third Army on the Western Front (transferred in early May to the Special Army, Southwestern Front), the complete *protokoly* of the regimental committee of the Batumskii Regiment and of the divisional committee of the 46th Infantry Division, Eleventh Army, Southwestern Front, as well as various documents from the archive of the XXXI Corps, chiefly relating to soldiers' committees. Among the latter is a complete set of depositions by witnesses of the arrest of a regimental commander, Colonel Gafner, on March 14, which I have incorporated into my narrative as a valuable case history. Even these additional materials, however, do not clear up all questions, or even allow one to generalize safely for all fronts, but they do give one a finer feeling for the dynamics of events and allow one to balance out the distortions of other types of sources. I often feel able to judge quite concretely where existing formulations are at fault or other investigators have gone astray, though I do so with some humility, keenly aware that unlimited access to the sources, if ever made possible, would undoubtedly reveal many inadequacies and errors in the picture presented here.

(The type was already set for this book when I learned of Frenkin's new work *Russkaia armia i revoliutsiia 1917-1918* [Munich: Logos GmbH, 1978]. It is an extraordinarily comprehensive study based on extensive archival research, going far beyond any other now in print.)

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